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BELFORD REGIS;

OR

SKETCHES OF A COUNTRY TOWN.

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BY

MARY RUSSELL MITFORD,

AUTHORESS OF

"RIENZI," "OUR VILLAGE," &c.

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IN THREE VOLUMES.

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BELFORD REGIS.

PETER JENKINS, THE POULTERER.

As I prophesied in the beginning of this book, so it fell out: Mr. Stephen Lane became parish-officer of Sunham. I did not, however, foresee that the matter would be so easily and so speedily settled; neither did he. Mr. Jacob Jones, the ex-ruler of that respectable hamlet, was a cleverer person than we took him for; and, instead of staying to be beaten, sagely preferred to "evacuate Flanders," and leave the enemy in undisputed possession of the field of battle. He did not even make his appearance at the vestry, nor did any of his partisans. Stephen had it all his own way; was appointed overseer, and found himself, to his great asto-

nishment, carrying all his points, sweeping away, cutting down, turning out, retrenching, and reforming so as never reformer did before; —for in the good town of Belford, although eventually triumphant, and pretty generally successful in most of his operations, he had been accustomed to play the part, not of a minister who originates, but of a leader of opposition who demolishes measures; in short, he had been a sort of check, a balance-wheel in the borough machinery, and never dreamt of being turned into a main-spring; so that, when called upon to propose his own plans, his success disconcerted him not a little. It was so unexpected, and he himself so unprepared for a catastrophe which took from him his own dear fault-finding ground, and placed him in the situation of a reviewer who should be required to write a better book than the one under dissection, in the place of cutting it up.

Our good butcher was fairly posed, and, what was worse, his adversary knew it. Mr. Jacob Jones felt his advantage, returned with all his forces (consisting of three individuals, like "a three-tailed bashaw") to the field which

he had abandoned, and commenced a series of skirmishing guerilla warfare—affairs of posts, as it were—which went near to make his ponderous, and hitherto victorious enemy, in spite of the weight of his artillery and the number and discipline of his troops, withdraw in his turn from the position which he found it so painful and so difficult to maintain. Mr. Jacob Jones was a great man at a quibble. He could not knock down like Stephen Lane, but he had a real talent for that sort of pulling to pieces which, to judge from the manner in which all children, before they are taught better, exercise their little mischievous fingers upon flowers, would seem to be instinctive in human nature. Never did a spoilt urchin of three years old demolish a carnation more completely than Mr. Jacob Jones picked to bits Mr. Lane's several propositions. On the broad question, the principle of the thing proposed, our good ex-butcher was pretty sure to be victorious; but in the detail, the clauses of the different measures, Mr. Jacob Jones, who had a wonderful turn for perplexing and puzzling whatever question he took in hand, a real genius for

confusion, generally contrived (for the gentleman was a "word-catcher who lived on syllables") by expunging half a sentence in one place, and smuggling in two or three words in another—by alterations that were anything but amendments, and amendments that overset all that had gone before, to produce such a mass of contradictions and nonsense, that the most intricate piece of special pleading that ever went before the Lord Chancellor, or the most addle-headed bill that ever passed through a Committee of the whole House, would have been common sense and plain English in the comparison. The man had eminent qualities for a debater too, especially a debater of that order,—incorrigible pertness, intolerable pertinacity, and a noble contempt of right and wrong. Even in that matter which is most completely open to proof, a question of figures, he was wholly inaccessible to conviction; show him the fact fifty times over, and still he returned to the charge,—still was his shrill squeaking treble heard above and between the deep sonorous bass of Stephen,—still did his small narrow person whisk and flitter around the "huge

rotundity" of that ponderous and excellent parish-officer, buzzing and stinging like some active hornet or slim dragon-fly about the head of one of his own oxen. There was no putting down Jacob Jones.

Our good butcher fretted and fumed, and lifted his hat from his head, and smoothed down his shining hair, and wiped his honest face, and stormed, and thundered, and vowed vengeance against Jacob Jones; and finally threatened not only to secede with his whole party from the vestry, but to return to the Butts, and leave the management of Sunham, workhouse, poor-rates, highways, and all, to his nimble competitor. One of his most trusty adherents indeed, a certain wealthy yeoman of the name of Alsop, well acquainted with his character, suggested that a very little flattery on the part of Mr. Lane, or even a few well-directed bribes, would not fail to dulcify and even to silence the worthy in question; but Stephen had never flattered anybody in his life—it is very doubtful if he knew how; and held bribery of any sort in a real honest abhorrence, very unusual for one who had had

so much to do with contested elections;—and to bribe and flatter Jacob Jones! Jacob, whom the honest butcher came nearer to hating than ever he had to hating anybody! His very soul revolted against it. So he appointed Farmer Alsop, who understood the management of "the chap," as he was wont to call his small opponent, deputy overseer, and betook himself to his private concerns, in the conduct of his own grazing farm, in overseeing the great shop in the Butts, in attending his old clubs, and mingling with his old associates in Belford; and, above all, in sitting in his sunny summer-house during the sultry evenings of July and August, enveloped in the fumes of his own pipe and clouds of dust from the high-road,—which was his manner of enjoying the pleasures of the country.

Towards autumn, a new and a different interest presented itself to the mind of Stephen Lane, in the shape of the troubles of one of his most intimate friends and most faithful and loyal adherents in the loyal borough of Belford Regis.

Peter Jenkins, the poulterer, his next-door

neighbour in the Butts, formed exactly that sort of contrast in mind and body to the gigantic and energetic butcher which we so often find amongst persons strongly attached to each other. Each was equally good and kind, and honest and true; but strength was the distinguishing characteristic of the one man, and weakness of the other. Peter, much younger than his friend and neighbour, was pale and fair, and slender and delicate, with very light hair, very light eyes, a shy timid manner, a small voice, and a general helplessness of aspect. "Poor fellow!" was the internal exclamation, the unspoken thought of everybody that conversed with him; there was something so pitiful in his look and accent: and yet Peter was one of the richest men in Belford, having inherited the hoards of three or four miserly uncles, and succeeded to the well-accustomed poultry-shop in the Butts, a high narrow tenement, literally stuffed with geese, ducks, chickens, pigeons, rabbits, and game of all sorts, which lined the doors and windows, and dangled from the ceiling, and lay ranged upon the counter in every possible

state, dead or alive, plucked or unplucked, crowding the dark, old-fashioned shop, and forming the strongest possible contrast to the wide ample repository next door, spacious as a market, where Stephen's calves, and sheep, and oxen, in their several forms of veal, and beef, and mutton, hung in whole carcases from the walls, or adorned in separate joints the open windows, or filled huge trays, or lay scattered on mighty blocks, or swung in enormous scales, strong enough to have weighed Stephen Lane himself in the balance. Even that stupendous flesh-bazaar did not give greater or truer assurance of affluence than the high, narrow, crowded menagerie of dead fowl next door.

Yet still was Peter justly called "Poor fellow!" In the first place, because he was, for a man, far over-gentle, much too like the inhabitants of his own feathery den,—was not only "pigeon-livered and lacked gall," but was actually chicken-hearted;—in the next, because he was, so to say, chicken-pecked, and, although a stranger to the comforts of matrimony, was comfortably under petticoat

government, being completely domineered over by a maiden sister.

Miss Judith Jenkins was a single woman of an uncertain age, lean, skinny, red-haired, exceedingly prim and upright, slow and formal in her manner, and, to all but Peter, remarkably smooth-spoken. To him her accent was invariably sharp, and sour, and peevish, and contradictory. She lectured him when at home, and rated him for going abroad. The very way in which she called him, though the poor man flew to obey her summons, the method after which she pronounced the innocent dissyllable "Peter," was a sort of taking to task. Having been his elder sister, (although nothing now was less palatable to her than any allusion to her right of primogeniture,) and his mother having died whilst he was an infant, she had been accustomed to exercise over him, from the time that he was in leading strings, all the privileges of a nurse and gouvernante, and still called him to account for his savings and spendings, his comings and goings, much as she used to do when he was an urchin in short coats. Poor

Peter never dreamt of rebellion; he listened and he endured; and every year as it passed over their heads seemed to increase her power and his submission. The uncivil world, always too apt to attribute any faults of temper in an old maid to the mere fact of her old-maidism, (whereas there really are some single women who are not more ill-humoured than their married neighbours,) used to attribute this acidity towards poor Peter, of which, under all her guarded upper manner, they caught occasional glimpses, to her maiden condition. I, for my part, believe in the converse reason. I hold that, which seemed to them the effect of her single state, to have been, in reality, its main cause. And nobody who had happened to observe the change in Miss Judith Jenkins' face, at no time over-beautiful, when, from the silent, modest, curtseying, shopwoman-like civility with which she had been receiving an order for a fine turkey poult, a sort of "butter won't melt in her mouth" expression was turned at once into a "cheese won't choke her" look and voice as she delivered the order to her unlucky bro-

ther, could be much astonished that any of the race of bachelors should shrink from the danger of encountering such a look in his own person. Add to this, that the damsel had no worldly goods and chattels, except what she might have saved in Peter's house, and, to do her justice, she was, I believe, a strictly honest woman; that the red hair was accompanied by red eye-brows and eye-lashes, and eyes that, especially when talking to Peter, almost seemed red too; that her face was usually freckled; and that, from her exceeding meagreness, her very fairness (if mere whiteness may be called such) told against her by giving the look of bones starting through the skin; and it will be admitted that there was no immediate chance of the unfortunate poulterer's getting rid, by the pleasant and safe means called matrimony, of an encumbrance under which he groaned and bent, like Sinbad the Sailor when bestridden by that hetormentor the Old Man of the Sea.

Thus circumstanced, Peter's only refuge and consolation was in the friendship and protection of his powerful neighbour, before whose

strength and firmness of manner and character (to say nothing of his bodily prowess, which, although it can never be exerted against them, does yet insensibly influence all women) the prim maiden quailed amain. With Stephen to back him, Peter dared attend public meetings and private clubs; and, when sorely put to it by Judith's lectures, would slip through the back way into Mrs. Lane's parlour, basking in the repose of her gentleness, or excited by her good husband's merriment, until all the evils of his home were fairly forgotten. Of course, the kind butcher and his sweet wife loved the kind and harmless creature whom they, and they alone, had the power of raising into comfort and happiness; and he repaid their affection by the most true and faithful devotion to Stephen in all affairs, whether election contests or squabbles of the corporation or the vestry. Never had leader of a party a more devoted adherent; and abating his one fault of weakness, a fault which brought its own punishment, he was a partisan who would have done honour to any cause,—honest, open, true, and generous,—and one who would

have been thoroughly hospitable, if his sister would but have let him.

As it was, he was a good fellow when she was out of the way, and had, like the renowned Jerry Sneak, his own moments of half-afraid enjoyment, on club-nights, and at Christmas parties; when, like the illustrious pinmaker, he sang his song and told his story with the best of them, and laughed, and rubbed his hands, and cracked his joke, and would have been quite happy, but for the clinging thought of his reception at home, where sat his awful sister, for she would sit up for him,

> "Gathering her brows like gathering storm,
> Nursing her wrath to keep it warm."

However, Stephen generally saw him in, and broke the first fury of the tempest, and sometimes laughed it off altogether. With Stephen to back him, he was not so much afraid. He even, when unusually elevated with punch, his favourite liquor, would declare that he did not mind her at all; what harm could a woman's scolding do? And though his courage would ooze out somewhat as he approached his own door, and ascended the

three steep steps, and listened to her sharp, angry tread in the passage, (for her very footsteps were to Peter's practised ear the precursors of the coming lecture,) yet, on the whole, whilst shielded by his champion and protector, the jolly butcher, he got on pretty well, and was perhaps as happy as a man linked to a domineering woman can well expect to be.

Mr. Lane's removal was a terrible stroke to Peter. The distance, it was true, was only half a mile; but the every-day friend, the next-door neighbour, was gone; and the poor poulterer fretted and pined, and gave up his club and his parish-meetings, grew thinner and thinner, and paler and paler, and seemed dwindling away into nothing. He avoided his old friend during his frequent visits to the Butts, and even refused Mrs. Lane's kind and pressing invitations to come and see them at Sunham. His sister's absence or presence had ceased to make any difference in him; his spirits were altogether gone, and his very heart seemed breaking.

Affairs were in this posture, when, one fine afternoon in the beginning of October, Stephen

was returning across Sunham Common from a walk that he had been taking over some of his pastures, which lay at a little distance from his house. He was quite unaccompanied, unless, indeed, his pet dog, Smoker, might be termed his companion — an animal of high blood and great sagacity, but so disguised by his insupportable fatness, that I myself, who have generally a tolerable eye when a greyhound is in question, took him for some new-fangled quadruped from foreign parts,— some monstrous mastiff from the Anthropophagi, or Brobdignaggian pointer. Smoker and his master were marching leisurely up Sunham Common, under the shade of a noble avenue of oaks, terminating at one end by a spacious open grove of the same majestic tree; the sun at one side of them, just sinking beneath the horizon, not making his usual "golden set," but presenting to the eye a ball of ruddy light; whilst the vapoury clouds on the east were suffused with a soft and delicate blush, like the reflection of roses on an alabaster vase; — the bolls of the trees stood out in an almost brassy brightness, and large portions of the foliage of the lower

branches were bathed, as it were, in gold, whilst the upper boughs retained the rich russet brown of the season; — the green turf beneath was pleasant to the eye and to the tread, fragrant with thyme and aromatic herbs, and dotted here and there with the many-coloured fungi of autumn; — the rooks were returning to their old abode in the oak-tops; children of all ages were gathering acorns underneath; and the light smoke was curling from the picturesque cottages, with their islets of gardens, which, intermingled with straggling horses, cows, and sheep, and intersected by irregular pools of water, dotted the surface of the village-green.

It was a scene in which a poet or a painter would have delighted. Our good friend Stephen was neither. He paced along, supporting himself on a tall, stout hoe, called a paddle, which, since he had turned farmer, he had assumed instead of his usual walking-stick, for the purpose of eradicating docks and thistles; — now beheading a weed — now giving a jerk amongst a drift of fallen leaves, and sending them dancing on the calm autumnal air; —

now catching on the end of his paddle an acorn as it fell from the tree, and sending it back amongst the branches like a shuttlecock;—now giving a rough but hearty caress to his faithful attendant Smoker, as the affectionate creature poked his long nose into his hand;—now whistling the beginning of one tune, now humming the end of another; whilst a train of thoughts, pleasant and unpleasant, merry and sad, went whirling along his brain. Who can describe or remember the visions of half an hour, the recollections of half a mile? First, Stephen began gravely to calculate the profits of those upland pastures, called and known by the name of the Sunham Crofts; the number of tons of hay contained in the ricks, the value of the grazing, and the deductions to be made for labour, manure, tithe, and poor-rate,—the land-tax, thought Stephen to himself, being redeemed;—then poor little Dinah Keep crossed his path, and dropped her modest curtsey, and brought to mind her bedridden father, and his night-mare, Jacob Jones, who had refused to make this poor cripple the proper allowance; and Stephen cursed Jacob in his heart, and

resolved to send Dinah a bit of mutton that very evening;—then Smoker went beating about in a patch of furze by the side of the avenue, and Stephen diverged from his path to help him, in hopes of a hare;—then, when that hope was fairly gone, and Stephen and Smoker had resumed their usual grave and steady pace, a sow, browsing among the acorns, with her young family, caught his notice and Smoker's, who had like to have had an affair with her in defence of one of the little pigs, whilst his master stopped to guess her weight. "Full fourteen score," thought Stephen, "as she stands; what would it be if fatted?—twenty, at least. A wonderful fine animal! I should like one of the breed." Then he recollected how fond Peter Jenkins used to be of roast pig;—then he wondered what was the matter with poor Peter;—and just at that point of his cogitations he heard a faint voice cry, "Stephen!"—and turning round to ascertain to whom the voice belonged, found himself in front of Peter himself, looking more shadowy than ever in the deepening twilight.

Greetings, kind and hearty, passed between

the sometime neighbours, and Smoker was by no means behindhand in expressing his pleasure at the sight of an old friend. They sat down on a bank of turf, and moss, and thyme, formed by a water-channel, which had been cut to drain the avenue in winter; and the poor poulterer poured his griefs into the sympathising ear of his indignant friend.

"And now she's worse than ever," quoth Peter; "I think soon that she'll want the key of the till. She won't let me go to the club, or the vestry, or the mayor's dinner: and the Tories have got hold of her, and if there should happen to be an election, she won't let me vote."

"Marry, and be rid of her, man! — that's my advice," shouted Stephen. "Dang it! if I'd be managed by any woman that ever was born. Marry, and turn her out of doors!" vociferated Stephen Lane, striking his paddle into the bank with such vehemence that that useful implement broke in the effort to pull it out again. "Marry, I say!" shouted Stephen.

"How can I?" rejoined the meek man of chickens; "she won't let me."

"Won't let him!" ejaculated the ex-butcher, with something like contempt. "Won't let him! Afore I 'd let any woman dare to hinder me —— Howsomever, men are not all alike. Some are as vicious as a herd of wild bulls, and some as quiet as a flock of sheep. Every man to his nature. Is there any lass whom you could fancy, Peter, provided a body could manage this virago of a sister of yours? Does any pretty damsel run in your head?"

"Why, I can't but say," replied Peter, (and, doubtless, if there had been light enough to see him, Peter, whilst saying it, blushed like a young girl,) "I can't but confess," said the man of the dove-cot, "that there is a little maiden——Did you ever see Sally Clements?"

"What!" rejoined the hero of the cleaver, "Sally Clements! Did I ever see her! Sally Clements—the dear little girl that, when her father first broke, and then died broken-hearted, refused to go and live in ease and plenty in Sir John's family here (and I always respected my lady for making her the offer) as nursery governess, because she would not leave her sick grandmother, and who has

stayed with her ever since, waiting on the poor old woman, and rearing poultry——"

"She's the best fattener of turkeys in the country," interrupted Peter.

"Rearing poultry," proceeded Stephen, "and looking after the garden by day, and sitting up half the night at needlework! Sally Clements—the prettiest girl within ten miles, and the best! Sally Clements—whom my mistress (and she's no bad judge of a young woman) loves as if she was her own daughter. Sally Clements! dang it, man! you shall have her. But does Sally like you?"

"I don't think she dislikes me," answered Peter modestly. "We've had a deal of talk when I have been cheapening her poultry,—buying, I should say; for, God knows, even if I had not liked her as I do, I never could have had the heart to bate her down. And I'm a great favourite with her good grandmother; and you know what a pleasure it would be to take care of her, poor old lady! as long as she lives, and how comfortably we could all live together in the Butts.——Only Judith——"

"Hang Judith!—you shall have the girl, man!" again ejaculated Stephen, thumping the broken paddle against the ground—"you shall have her, I say!"

"But think of Judith! And then, since Jacob Jones has got hold of her ——"

"Jacob Jones!" exclaimed Stephen, in breathless astonishment.

"Yes. Did not I tell you that she was converted to the Tories? Jacob Jones has got hold of her; and he and she both say that I'm in a consumption, and want me to quarrel with you, and to make my will, and leave all to her, and make him executor; and then I do believe they would worry me out of my life, and marry before I was cold in my coffin, and dance over my grave," sighed poor Peter.

"Jacob Jones!" muttered Stephen to himself, in soliloquy; "Jacob Jones!" And then, after ten minutes' hard musing, during which he pulled off his hat, and wiped his face, and smoothed down his shining hair, and broke the remains of his huge paddle to pieces, as if it had been a willow twig, he rubbed his hands

with a mighty chuckle, and cried, with the voice of a Stentor, "Dang it, I have it!"

"Harkye, man!" continued he, addressing Peter, who had sat pensively on one side of his friend, whilst Smoker reposed on the other—"Harkye, man! you shall quarrel with me, and you shall make your will. Send Lawyer Davis to me to-night; for we must see that it shall be only a will, and not a conveyance or a deed of gift; and you shall also take to your bed. Send Thomson, the apothecary, along with Davis: they're good fellows both, and will rejoice in humbugging Miss Judith. And then you shall insist on Jacob's marrying Judith, and shall give her five hundred pounds down,—that's a fair fortune, as times go; I don't want to cheat the woman; besides, it's worth anything to be quit of her; and then they shall marry. Marriages are made in heaven, as my mistress says; and if that couple don't torment each other's heart out, my name's not Stephen. And when they are fairly gone off on their bridal excursion,— to Windsor, maybe; ay, Mistress Judith used to want to see the Castle,

— off with them to Windsor from the church-door; — and then for another will, and another wedding — hey, Peter! — and a handsome marriage-settlement upon little Sally. We'll get her and her grandmother to my house to-morrow, and my wife will see to the finery. Off with you, man! Don't stand there, between laughing and crying; but get home, and set about it. And mind you don't forget to send Thomson and Lawyer Davis to me this very evening."

And home went Stephen, chuckling; and, as he said, it was done, — ay, within a fortnight from that very day; and the two couples were severally as happy and as unhappy as their several qualities could make them — Mr. and Mrs. Jones finding so much employment in plaguing each other, that the good poulterer and his pretty wife, and Stephen, and the hamlet of Sunham, were rid of them altogether.

THE SAILOR'S WEDDING.

Besides Mrs. Martin, her maid Patty, and her cat, there was one inmate of the little toy-shop in the market-place, who immediately attracted Mr. Singleton's attention, and not only won, but secured, the warm and constant affection of the kind-hearted bachelor. It was a chubby, noisy, sturdy, rude, riotous elf, of some three years old, still petticoated, but so self-willed, and bold, and masterful, so strong and so conscious of his strength, so obstinate and resolute, and, above all, so utterly contemptuous of female objurgation, and rebellious to female rule, (an evil propensity that seems born with the *unfair* sex,) that it was by no means necessary to hear his Christian name of Tom, to feel assured that the urchin in question belonged to the masculine half of the species. Nevertheless, daring, wilful, and

unruly as it was, the brat was loveable, being, to say the truth, one of the merriest, drollest, best natured, most generous, and most affectionate creatures that ever bounded about this work-a-day world; and Mr. Singleton, who, in common with many placid quiet persons, liked nothing so well as the reckless lightheartedness which supplied the needful impetus to his own tranquil spirit, took to the boy the very first evening, and became, from that hour, his most indulgent patron and protector, his champion in every scrape, and refuge in every calamity. There was no love lost between them. Tom, who would have resisted Mrs. Martin or Patty to the death; who, the more they called him the more he would not come, and the more they bade him not do a thing, the more he did it; who, when cautioned against wetting his feet, jumped up to his neck* in the water-

* I remember an imp, the son of a dear friend of mine, of some four or five years old, of very delicate frame, but of a most sturdy and masterful spirit, who one day standing on the lawn without a hat, in the midst of a hard rain, said to his mother, who, after nurses and nursery-maids had striven in vain with the screaming, kicking, struggling urchin, tried her gentler influence to prevail on him to

tub, and when desired to keep himself clean, solaced himself and the tabby cat with a game at romps in the coal-hole; who, in short, whilst under female dominion, played every prank of which an unruly boy is capable—was amenable to the slightest word or look from Mr. Singleton, came at his call, went away at his desire; desisted at his command from riding the unfortunate wooden steed, who, to say nothing of two or three dangerous falls, equally perilous to the horse and his rider, ran great risk of being worn out by Master Tom's passion for equestrian exercise; and even under his orders abandoned his favourite exercise of parading before the door beating a toy-drum, or blowing a penny-trumpet, and producing from those

come in doors for fear of catching cold—"I won't go in! I will stand here! I choose to catch cold! I like to be ill! and if you plague me much longer, I'll die!" This hopeful young gentleman has outlived the perils of his childhood, (I suppose his self-will was drubbed out of him by stronger and equally determined comrades at a public school,) and he is now an aspirant of some eminence in the literary and political world. I have not seen him these twenty years: but if this note should meet his eye, and he should happen to recognise his own portrait, he would be amused by my tender recollection of his early days.

noisy implements a din more insupportable than ever such instruments have been found capable of making, before or since.

Mr. Singleton did more: not content with the negative benefit of restraining Master Tom's inclination for idleness, he undertook and accomplished the positive achievement of commencing his education. Under his auspices, at the cost of many cakes and much gingerbread, and with the great bribe of being able to read for himself the stories of fairies and giants, of Tom Thumb, and Blue Beard, and Cinderella, and Sinbad the Sailor, which he was now fain to coax his aunt and her maid Patty into telling him, did Tom conquer the mysteries of the alphabet and spelling-book, in spite of the predictions of the dame of a neighbouring day-school, who had had the poor boy at her academy, as she was pleased to call it, for half a year, during which time she and her birch, put together, had never been able to teach him the difference between A and B, and who now, in that common spirit of prophecy in which "the wish is father to the thought," boldly foretold that "all the Mr.

Singletons in England would never make a scholar of Tom Lyndham; she, for her part, had no notion of a child, who not only stole her spectacles, but did not mind being whipt for it when he had done. She wished no ill to the boy, but he would come to no good. All the world would see that."

Strange as it may seem, this effusion of petty malice had its effect in stimulating the efforts of our good curate. The spirit of contradiction, that very active principle of our common nature, had its existence even in him; but, as bees can extract wax and honey from poisonous plants, so in his kind and benevolent temper it showed itself only in an extraordinary activity in well-doing. "Tom Lyndham shall be a scholar," thought and said Mr. Singleton; and as his definition of the word was something different from that of the peevish old sibyl, whose notion of scholarship reached no farther than the power of reading or rather chanting, without let or pause, a chapter of crabbed names in the Old Testament, with such a comprehension of the sense as it pleased Heaven, and such a pronunciation

as would have made an Hebraist stare, he not only applied himself earnestly to the task of laying the foundation of a classical education, by teaching the boy writing, ciphering, and the rudiments of the Latin grammar, but exerted all his influence to get him admitted, at as early an age as the rules would permit, to the endowed grammar-school of the town.

The master of the school, a man who united, as we have before said, great learning to a singular generosity of character and sweetness of temper, received with more than common kindness the fine open-countenanced boy, whom Mr. Singleton recommended so strongly to his notice and protection. But after he had been with him about the same time that he had passed with the dame of the day-school, he, in answer to his patron's anxious inquiries, made a prophecy nearly resembling hers,—to wit, that Tom Lyndham, spirited, intelligent, and clever as he undoubtedly was, seemed to him the most unlikely boy of his form to become an eminent scholar.

And as time wore away, this persuasion only became the more rooted in the good Doctor's mind. "He may, to be sure, take to Greek,

as you say, Mr. Singleton, and go off to Oxford on the archbishop's foundation; things that seem as impossible do sometimes happen; nevertheless, to judge from probabilities, and from the result of a pretty long experience, I should say that to expect from Tom Lyndham anything beyond the learning that will bear him creditably through the school and the world, is to demand a change of temper and of habit not far from miraculous. I don't say what the charms of the Greek Grammar may effect, but, in my mind, the boy who is foremost in every sport, and first in every exercise; who swims, and rows, and dances, and fences better than any lad of his inches in the county; and who, in defence of a weaker child, or to right some manifest wrong, will box, ay, and beat into the bargain, a youth half as big again as himself; and who moreover is the liveliest, merriest, pleasantest little fellow that ever came under my observation—is far fitter for the camp than the college. Send him into the world, that's the place for him. Put him into the army, and I'll answer for his success. For my own part, I should not wonder to find him

enlisting some day; neither should I care; for if he went out a drummer, he'd come back a general; nothing can keep down Tom Lyndham:" and with this prognostic, at once pleasant and puzzling, (for poor Mr. Singleton had not an acquaintance in the army, except the successive recruiting-officers who had at various times carried off the heroes of Belford,) the worthy Doctor marched away.

Fortune, however, who seems to find amusement in sometimes disappointing the predictions of the wise, and sometimes bringing them to pass in the most unexpected manner and by totally opposite means, had a different destiny for our friend Tom.

It so happened that one of the principal streets of our good town of Belford, a street the high road through which leading westward, bore the name of Bristol Street, boasted a bright red mansion, retired from the line of houses, with all the dignity of a dusty shrubbery, a sweep not very easy to turn, a glaring bit of blank wall, and a *porte cochère*. Now the wall being itself somewhat farther back than the other houses in the street, and the

space between that and the ordinary pavement being regularly flagged, an old sailor without his legs had taken possession of the interval, for the sake of writing, with white and coloured chalks, sundry loyal sentences, such as "God save the King," "Rule Britannia," and so forth, by way of excitement to the passers-by to purchase one from a string of equally loyal sea-ballads that hung overhead, intermixed with twopenny portraits of eminent naval commanders, all very much alike, and all wearing very blue coats and very red faces.

At first, the two respectable ladies of the mansion (dowager spinsters, Morris by name) objected greatly to the use made of their wall and their pavement by the crippled veteran in question, who was commonly known throughout Belford by the name of "Poor Jack;" probably from his attachment to the well-known sailor's ditty, which happened to form his first introduction to the younger of the two ladies in question:

"Here am I, poor Jack,
Just come home from sea,
With shiners in my sack,—
Pray what d'ye think of me?"

"I think you a very saucy person," replied Miss Arabella Morris to this question, not said but sung by the sailor in a most stentorian voice, as he lay topping and tailing the great I in "God save great George our King," just on one side of their gate. "I think you are a very saucy person," quoth Miss Arabella, "to sit begging here, just at our door."

"Begging!" rejoined poor Jack; "I'm no beggar, I hope. I've lost my precious limbs, when I fought under Admiral Rodney; I've a pension, bless his Majesty, and have no call to disparage the service by begging like a landlubber.

"Sailors to forget their duty,
Must not come for to go—"

chanted Jack.

"I must really apply to the mayor," said Miss Arabella.

"Go," said Jack, continuing his work and resuming his stave.

"When the captain he heard of it,
He very much applauded what she had done,
And he made her the first lieutenant
Of the gallant Thunder bomb."

"Made me a first lieutenant!" exclaimed

the affronted Arabella. "Was ever anything so impertinent? Pray, if you are not a beggar, what may you be?"

"My name, d'ye see, 's Tom Tough,
Oh, I've seen a little sarvice,
Where the foaming billows roar and the winds do blow;
I've sailed with noble Howe,
And I've sailed with gallant Jervis,
And only lost an eye, and got a timber toe;
And more if you'd be knowing,
I've sailed with old Boscawen:"

again shouted (for singing is hardly the word to express his sort of music) the incorrigible Jack.

"Well, I must go to the mayor," said Miss Arabella; and Jack again uplifted his voice:—

"Then in Providence I trust,
For you know what must be, must:"

and, consoled by this philosophical strain, he tranquilly continued his occupation, which, after a little persuasion from the mayor, and something like an apology from Jack himself, (to whose looks and ways they began to get accustomed,) the good ladies permitted him to pursue in peace and quietness under their sheltering wall.

The above conversation will have shown that poor Jack was something of a humorist; but his invincible good humour was his distinguishing qualification. I doubt if there was in all England a more contented person than the poor cripple who picked up a precarious livelihood by selling loyal ballads in Bristol Street in Belford. Maimed as he was, there was something in his round bullet-head, and rough sun-burnt countenance,—in his nod, his wink, his grin, (for it would not do to call such a contortion a smile,) in the snap of his fingers, and the roll of his short athletic body—more expressive of fun and merriment than I ever beheld in any human being. Call him poor Jack, indeed! Why, if happiness be wealth, he was the richest Jack in Christendom!

So thought Tom Lyndham, whose road to and from school passed the *lair* of the sailor, and who having stood one evening to hear him go through the whole ballad,

"On board of the Arethusa,"

and finally joined in the *refrain* with much of Jack's own spirit, fell into conversation with

him on the battles he had fought, the ships he had served in, and the heroes he had served under, (and it was remarkable that Jack talked of the ships with the same sort of personal affection which he displayed towards their captains,) and from that evening made up his mind that he would be a sailor too.

Sooth to say, the enthusiasm with which Jack spoke of Keppel and Rodney, and Parker and Howe, as well as of the commanders of his youth, Hawke and "old Boscawen;" his graphic description of the sea-fights in which the English flag did really seem to be the ensign of victory; the rough, bold, manly tone of the ballads which he sung, and the personal character of the narrator—were in themselves enough to work such an effect on a lively, spirited, ambitious boy, whose bravery of mind and hardihood of body made him account toil and danger rather as elements of enjoyment, like the bright frosty air of winter, than as evils to shrink from; whilst his love of distinction made him covet glory for its own sake, and his grateful and affectionate temper rendered the prospect of wealth (for of course he

was to be a second Rodney) delightful as the means of repaying to his aunt and Mr. Singleton the benefits which he had derived from their kindness.

Besides this, he had always had an innate passion for the water. His earliest pranks of dabbling in kennels, and plunging in pools, had shown his duck-like propensities; and half his scrapes at school had occurred in a similar way:—bathing before the appointed day, swimming in dangerous places, rowing and fishing at forbidden hours; he had been caught half-a-dozen times boat-building at the wharf, and had even been detected in substituting Robinson Crusoe for the Greek Grammar,—from which Mr. Singleton expected such miracles. In short, Tom Lyndham was one of those boys whose genius may fairly be called semi-aquatic.

That he would be a sailor was Tom's firm resolution. His only doubt was whether to accomplish the object in the regular manner by apprising Mrs. Martin and Mr. Singleton of his wishes, or to embrace the speedier and less troublesome method of running away. The

latter mode offered the great temptation of avoiding remonstrances equally tedious (and the grateful boy would hardly allow himself to think *how* tedious!) and unavailing, and of escaping from the persuasions of which his affectionate heart felt in anticipation the power to grieve, though not to restrain; besides, it was the approved fashion of your young adventurer,—Robinson Crusoe had run away; and he consulted Jack seriously on the measure, producing, in answer to certain financial questions which the experience of the tar suggested, a new half-crown, two shillings, a crooked sixpence, and sundry halfpence, as his funds for the expedition.

"Five and threepence halfpenny!" exclaimed the prudent mariner, counting the money, and shaking his head,—"'Twont do, master! Consider, there's the voyage to Portsmouth, on board o' the what d'ye call 'um, the coach there; and then you'll want new rigging, and have to lie at anchor a shortish bit maybe, before you get afloat. I'll tell you what, messmate, leave's light; ax his honour the chaplain, the curate, or whatever you call him, and

if so be he turns cantankerous, you can but cut and run after all."

And Tom agreed to take his advice; and after settling in his own mind as he walked home various ingenious plans for breaking the matter gradually and tenderly to his good old aunt, (on whom he relied for the still more arduous task of communicating this tremendous act of contumacy to his reverend patron,) he, from sheer nervousness and over-excitement, bolted into the house, and forgetting all his intended preparations and softenings, — a thing which has often happened, from the same causes, to older and wiser persons, — shouted out at once to Mrs. Martin, who happened to be in the shop talking to Mr. Singleton, "Aunt, I 'm determined to go to sea directly; and if you won't let me, I 'll run away."

Never were two people more astonished. And as the hitherto respectful and dutiful boy, who with all his spirit had never before contradicted a wish expressed by either, continued to answer to all remonstrances, "I will go to sea; and if you won't let me, I 'll run away," Mr. Singleton began to think it be-

to inquire into his own views, motives, and prospects.

Vague enough they were, to be sure! Robinson Crusoe, and a crippled sailor, and half-a-dozen ballads for inducements, and a letter of introduction from poor Jack to a certain veteran of his own standing, Bob Griffin by name, formerly a boatswain, and now keeping a public-house at Portsea, and *commanding*, according to him of the stumps, a chain of interest, somewhat resembling Tom Bowling's famous ladder of promotion in Roderick Random, a scrawl directed in red chalk in printed letters half an inch long, to MISTUR BOB GRIFIN LANLURD SHIP AGRUND PORSEE, by way of introduction to the naval service of Great Britain! However, there was in the earnestness of the lad, in the very slightness of the means on which he built, and in his bold, ardent, and manly character, that evidence of the bent of his genius, the strong and decided turn for one pursuit and one only, which it is scarcely wise to resist.

Mr. Singleton, remembering, perhaps, the prediction of the good Doctor, yielded. He

happened to have a first cousin, a captain in the navy; and on visiting our friend Jack, whom he found repairing the chalking of "Rule Britannia," and chanting two lines of his favourite stave,

"But the worst of it was when the little ones were sickly,
Whether they would live or die the Doctor could not tell,"

he had the satisfaction to find that he had sailed with his relation when second lieutenant of a sloop called the Gazelle; and although relinquishing, with many thanks, the letter of introduction to "Mistur Bob Grifin," actually accepted one from the same hard honest fist to Captain Conyers; and it is to be doubted whether poor Jack's recommendation of "the tight youngster," as the veteran called him, had not as much to do with the captain's cordial reception of his new midshipman, as the more elaborate praises of Mr. Singleton.

A midshipman, however, he was. The war was at its height, and he had the luck (excellent luck as he thought it) to be in the very hottest of its fury. In almost every fight of the great days of our naval glory, the days of Nelson and his immediate successors, was Tou

Lyndham first of the first, bravest of the brave, readiest of the ready. From the moment that his age and rank allowed him to be officially noticed in the despatches, he was so; and it is to be questioned whether the very happiest moment of Mr. Singleton's life was not that in which he first read Tom's name in the Gazette. He cried like a child; and then he read it to Mrs. Martin, and whilst trying to lecture her for crying, cried again himself. He took the paper round the town to every house of decent gentility, from the mayor's downwards; read it to the parish-clerk, and the sexton; and finally relinquished an evening party to which he was engaged at the Miss Morrises', to carry the news and the newspaper to poor Jack, who, grown too infirm to face the weather, had been comfortably placed, through his kindness, in an almshouse about two miles off. It is even reported that, on this occasion, Mr. Singleton, although by no means noted for his skill in music, was so elated as to join poor Jack in the chorus of

"On board of the Arethusa,"

in honour of Tom Lyndham.

From this time all prospered with our gallant sailor,—except, indeed, a few glorious scars which he would have been ashamed to want, and one of which, just after he had been appointed first lieutenant to the Diana, gave him the opportunity of coming back to Belford, for a short time, to regain his health, and revisit his old friends. Think of the delight of Mr. Singleton, of Mrs. Martin, of her maid Patty, and of poor Jack!

"Here am I, poor Jack!"

shouted the veteran, when Tom made his appearance;

"Here am I, poor Jack,
Just come home from sea,
With shiners in my sack,—
Pray what d'ye think of me?"

And the above, as it happened, was highly appropriate; for, between battles and prizes, Mr. Lyndham, although still so young a man, was rich enough to allow him to display his frank and noble generosity of spirit in the most delicate way to Mr. Singleton and his aunt, and in the most liberal to Jack and Patty. None who had been kind to him were for-

gotten; and his delightful spirit and gaiety, his animated good humour, his acuteness and intelligence, rendered him the very life of the place.

He was a singularly fine young man too; not tall, but strong, muscular, and well-built, with a noble chest, and that peculiar carriage of the head, which gives so much of dignity to the air and figure. The head itself was full of manliness and expression. The short curling black hair, already giving token of early baldness, and exposing a high, broad, polished forehead, whose fairness contrasted with the sun-burnt complexion of the rest of the face; an eagle eye, a mouth combining firmness and sweetness, regular features, and a countenance at once open, spirited, and amiable,—harmonised well with a character and reputation of which his fellow-townsmen already felt proud. Tom Lyndham was the very pride of Belford; happy was the damsel whom he honoured with his hand at the monthly assembly; and, when he rejoined his ship, he was said to have carried away, unintentionally, more hearts than had been won with care, and

pain, and malice prepense, by any half-dozen flirting recruiting-officers in the last half-dozen years.

No Belford beauty was, however, destined to captivate the brave sailor. Love and fortune had prepared for him a very different destiny.

Returning home towards the end of the war, (I mean the great war, the war *par eminence*, the war with Napoleon,) into Portsmouth Harbour, or rather bringing in a prize, a frigate of many more guns and much greater force than his own, the gallant Captain Lyndham (for he had now been for some years posted) no sooner set foot on shore, than he encountered an old messmate. "Ha, Lyndham! your old luck, I see! You and the little Laodamia have peppered the Frenchmen, as usual," said the brave Captain Manning. "Do you make any stay at Portsmouth?"

"Yes," replied Captain Lyndham; "I have sent my first lieutenant to London with despatches, and shall be fixed here for some days."

"I am thoroughly glad to hear it," rejoined

his friend; "for I myself am rather awkwardly situated. An old aunt of mine has just brought two of my cousins to see the lions, depending on me for their escort. Now I must be off to the Admiralty immediately; dare not stay another hour for all the aunts and cousins in Christendom. They, poor souls, don't know a creature in the place; and I shall be eternally obliged to you if you will take my turn of duty, and walk them over the dock-yards, and so forth. By the way, they are nice girls—not sisters, but cousins. One is an heiress, with above 3,000*l.* a-year, and a sweet place by the side of the Wye; the other is called a beauty. I don't think her so; or, rather, I prefer the heiress. But nice girls they are both. I have the honour to be their guardian, and if either should hit your fancy, you have my free leave to win her and wear her. So now come with me, and I'll introduce you."

And in five minutes more they were in one of the best rooms at the Fountain, and Captain Lyndham was introduced to Mrs. Lacy, and to Miss Manning and Miss Sophia Manning.

Mrs. Lacy was a lady-like elderly woman, a

widow without a family, and very fond of her nieces, who had been brought up under her own eye, and seemed to supply to her the place of daughters. "This is the heiress!" thought Captain Lyndham, as he glanced over a tall commanding figure, expensively and fashionably dressed, and with that decided air of consequence and self-importance which the habit of power is too apt to give to a person in that unfortunate predicament. "This is the heiress! and this, I suppose, must be the beauty," thought Captain Lyndham, turning to a shorter, slenderer, fairer young woman, very simply dressed, but all blushes and smiles, and youthful animation. "This must be the beauty," thought the captain, "and whatever Manning may say, beautiful she is—never saw a sweeter creature than this Miss Sophy."

And if he thought Sophy Manning pretty then, the impression was far deepened when he had passed two or three days in her company—had walked her over the wonders of that floating world, a man of war—had shown her the dock-yards, with their miracles of machinery; and had even persuaded Mrs. Lacy, a timorous

woman, the least in the world afraid of being drowned, and Miss Manning, a thorough fine lady, exceedingly troubled for her satin pelisse, first of all to take a dinner on board the dear Laodamia, and then to suffer themselves to be rowed round St. Helen's in the captain's own boat, gallantly manned by the officers of the ship.

Small enjoyment had Mrs. Lacy, in fear of her life, or the stately Honoria, in care for her finery; but Sophy, in a white gown and a straw bonnet, thinking nothing of herself or of her dress, but wholly absorbed by a keen and vivid interest in the detail of a sailor's life—in admiration of the order and cleanliness that everywhere met her eye, (always the first point of astonishment to a landswoman,) and in a still more intense feeling of pleasure and wonder at the careless good humour of those lords of the ocean,—bold as lions to their enemies, playful as kittens to their friends,—was full of delight. Nothing could equal her enthusiasm for the navy. The sailors, who, like dogs and children and women, and all other creatures who have not spoilt their fine natural

instinct by an over-cultivation of the reasoning powers, are never mistaken in the truth of a feeling, and never taken in by its assumption, perceived it at once, and repaid it by the most unfeigned and zealous devotion. They took all possible care of Mrs. Lacy and Miss Manning, as women, and ladies, and friends of their captain; but Miss Sophy was the girl for them. They actually preferred her pretty face to the figure-head of the Laodamia.

And Captain Lyndham, himself an enthusiast for his profession, what thought he of this enthusiasm for the sea, and the navy, and that frigate of frigates, the Laodamia? Did he like it the less because he might honestly suspect that some little reference to himself had strengthened and quickened this deep interest? because she had drawn from him his own early history, and talked of the toy-shop in the market-place of Belford, and of poor Jack, and the maid Patty, and even of Mr. Singleton himself, (little as one would think that good gentleman, now abroad with his third wife, was calculated to strike a young lady,) with almost as much affection as of his frigate and his prize, and his

ship's crew, and the absent first lieutenant, his especial friend, and a little midshipman, his especial protegé? To any man of sensibility, this sensibility, shown by a woman, young, lovely, animated, and artless, would have been dangerous; to a sailor just come ashore it was irresistible. He made her talk in return of her own friends and pleasures and amusements, of her home at Sanbury, where she had lived all her life with her aunt and her cousin, and where she hoped always to live; ("not always," thought our friend the captain;) and how much more loveable those dear relations were in that dear home. "My aunt," said Sophy, "is nervous and timid, so that you know nothing of her but that infirmity; and dear Honor does not love travelling, and does not like the sea, and has been all her life so much admired, that she is a little spoilt, and does not always know what she would have; but you will love Honor when you see her at home."

"I may like her," said the captain, "but I shall never love any woman but one;" and then followed, in full form, the declaration and the acceptance. "I am so glad that you are not

the heiress," added Captain Lyndham, after repeating to her her cousin's jesting permission to him to marry which of his wards he liked best; "I am so glad that you are not the heiress!"

"Are you?" said Sophy quietly. "Now I should have thought that you, thorough sportsman as you are for a sailor," added Sophy slyly, "would have liked Sanbury Manor, with its right of shooting, coursing, and fishing, and its glorious Wye river. You would like Sanbury Manor."

"Hang Sanbury Manor!" exclaimed the captain.

"Nay," said Sophy, "it's a pretty place, and a pretty house; one of those old-fashioned houses that fall upon the eye like a picture. The very lodge at Sanbury is beautiful. You must not take an aversion to Sanbury."

"I should like any place that had been your home, pretty or ugly," replied Captain Lyndham; "or rather, I should think any house pretty that you lived in. But nevertheless I am heartily glad that you are not the heiress of Sanbury, because I have been so fortunate with

prizes, and you seem so simple in your tastes, that I have enough for both of us; and now no one can even suspect me of being mercenary—of thinking of anything or anybody but your own dear self."

"*I* should not have suspected you," said Sophy tenderly; "but you must go to Sanbury, and look at the old place, my home for so many years; you promise me that?"

"Yes," replied the captain, "but it must be with Sophy Lyndham, and not with Sophy Manning;"—and, in spite of Sophy's blushing "must indeed!" so it was settled. They were all to go to London, to which the affairs of his ship and his prize now called the captain. There they were to be married; and on their return from a bridal excursion to Bath and Clifton, and Wales, were to pay a short visit to Mrs. Lacy and Honor, at the old manor-house, which had for so many years been the fair bride's only home.

Mrs. Lacy, on being apprised of the intended marriage, began talking about money and settlements, and those affairs which, to persons not in love, seem so important; but Captain

Lyndham stopped her, and Sophy stopped her; and as, in a letter to Captain Manning, the generous sailor desired that writings might be prepared, by which all that he was worth in the world should be settled on Sophy and her children—and as these settlements, read over by the lawyer in the usual unintelligible manner, were signed by the enamoured seaman without the slightest examination, it was impossible for any guardian to object to conduct so confiding and so liberal.

"Oh that poor Jack could see this day!" was Captain Lyndham's exclamation, as they were leaving London after the happy ceremony, in his own elegant new carriage, attended, somewhat to his surprise, by the lady's-maid, whom he had thought exclusively devoted to the service of Miss Manning,—"Oh that poor Jack could see this day!—you must make acquaintance with him, Sophy, and with my good aunt, and Mr. Singleton. You must know them, Sophy; they will so adore you!"

"And I shall so love the people whom you love," rejoined Sophy: but we have no room

for bridal talk, and must hasten to the conclusion of our story.

After a few days of rapid travelling,—short days they seemed to the married lovers,—after a very brief tour, for the bridegroom's time was limited,—they arrived at the beautiful village of Sanbury.

"There it is—the dear manor-house!" exclaimed Sophy, as they approached a fine old building, embosomed in its own venerable oaks, the silver Wye winding like a shining snake amid the woody hills and verdant lawns;—"There it is!" exclaimed the fair bride; "mine own dear home! And your home too, my own dear husband! for, being mine, it is yours," continued she, with a smile that would have made a man overlook a greater misfortune than that of having married an heiress. "You are really the master of Sanbury, think of it what you may," pursued the fair bride. "It is my first deceit, and shall be my last. But when I found that because Honoria was the elder, you took her for the richer cousin, I could not resist the temptation of this little

surprise; and if you are angry, there," pointing to the side of the road, "sits one who will plead for me."

And suddenly, from the beautiful Gothic lodge, the gate belonging to which had been so arranged as to open with a pulley, arose the well-known sounds,

"Here am I, poor Jack,
Just come home from sea,
With shiners in my sack—
Pray what d'ye think of me?"

And there sat poor Jack himself in all his glory, waving his hat over his grey head, with the tears streaming down his honest cheeks, absolutely tipsy with joy.

And before Captain Lyndham had sufficiently recovered from his astonishment to speak a word—indeed, whilst he was still clasping his lovely wife to his own warm heart, the carriage had reached the mansion, on the steps of which stood, in one happy group, her people and his; Captain Manning, Mrs. Lacy, and Honor (then really beautiful in her smiling sympathy), Mr. Singleton (who by good luck had just returned to England), Mrs. Martin,

and the little maid Patty, standing behind on the upper step, and looking two inches taller in her joy and delight.

So much for the Sailor's Wedding. There can be no need to say, that the married life which sprang from such a beginning was as happy as it was prosperous.

COUNTRY EXCURSIONS.

Some celebrated writer (was it Addison?) cites, as a proof of the instinctive love of the country, which seems implanted in the human breast, the fact, that the poorest inhabitants of great cities cherish in their wretched garrets or cellars some dusty myrtle or withering geranium, something that vegetates and should be green; so that you shall see in the meanest window of the meanest street some flower or flowering plant stuck in a piece of broken crockery, —a true and genuine tribute to that inherent love of nature which makes a part of our very selves. I never see such a symptom of the yearning after green fields without recognising the strong tie of fellow-feeling with the poor inmate; and the more paltry the plant, the more complete and perfect is the sympathy.

There is a character in one of the old plays (I think "The Jovial Crew," by Ben Jonson's servant Broome), who conducts himself like a calm, sedate, contented justice's clerk all the winter, but who, at the first sign of spring, when the sap mounts into the trees and the primrose blossoms in the coppices, feels the impulse of the season irresistible, obeys literally the fine stage-direction of the piece, "The nightingale calls without," and sallies forth to join the gipsies, to ramble all day in the green lanes, and sleep at night under the hedges.*

Now, one of the greatest proofs of the truth of these delineations was to be found in the fact, that the quiet old ladies of Belford, the demure spinsters and bustling widows, to say nothing of their attendant beaux, were them-

* A friend of mine, one of the most accomplished men and eloquent preachers in London, says that, as the spring advances, he feels exactly the yearning for the country described by the old dramatist. He does not join the gipsies; but he declares that it requires all the force of his mind, as well as the irresistible claims of the most binding of all professions, to detain him in London. Talk of slavery! Are we not all the bondsmen of circumstances, the thralls of conscience and of duty? Where is he that is free?

selves seized, two or three times in the course of the summer, with the desire of a country excursion. It is true that they were not penned up like the poor artisans of London, or even the equally pitiable official personage of the old dramatist,—they were not literally caged birds, and Belford was not London: on the contrary, most of them had little slips of garden-ground, dusty and smoky, where currants and gooseberries came to nothing, and even the sweet weed mignonette refused to blow; and many of them lived on the outskirts of the town, and might have walked country-ward if they would; but they were bound by the minute and strong chains of habit, and could turn no other way than to the street,—the dull, darksome, dingy street. Their feet had been so used to the pavement, that they had lost all relish for the elastic turf of the greensward. Even the roadside paths were too soft for their tread. Flagstones for them; and turf, although smooth, and fine, and thick, and springy as a Persian carpet—although fragrant and aromatic as a bed of thyme,—turf for those who liked it!

Two or three times in the year, however,

even these street-loving ladies were visited with a desire to breathe a freer air, and become dames and damsels errantes for the day. The great river that glided so magnificently under the ridge of the Upton hills, within a mile of the town, seemed to offer irresistible temptations to a water-party, the more so as some very fine points of river scenery were within reach, and the whole course of the stream, whether sweeping grandly along its own rich and open meadows, or shut in by steep woody banks, was marked with great and varied beauty. But, somehow or other, a water-party was too much for them. The river was navigable; and in that strange and almost startling process of being raised or sunken in the locks, there was a real or an apparent danger that would have discomposed their nerves and their dignity. Ladies of a certain age should not squall if they can help it. The spinsters of Belford had an instinctive perception of the truth of this axiom; and although Mr. Singleton, who liked the diversion of gudgeon-fishing (the only fishing, as far as I can perceive, which requires neither trouble, nor patience, nor skill, and in

which, if you put the line in, you are pretty sure within a few minutes to pull a fish out)—although Mr. Singleton, who liked this quiet sport, often tried to tempt his female friends into a sober water-frolic, he never could succeed. Water-parties were reserved for the families of the neighbourhood.

And perhaps the ladies of Belford were the wiser of the two. Far be it from me to depreciate the water! writing as I am at four o'clock P. M. on the twenty-sixth of this hot, sunny, drouthy August 1834, in my own little garden—which has already emptied two ponds, and is likely to empty the brook,—my garden, the watering of which takes up half the time of three people, and which, although watered twice a day, does yet, poor thing! look thirsty—and, for my garden, prematurely shabby and old;* and who, dearly as I love that paradise

* Besides the great evils of a drought in the flower-garden, of dwarfing the blossoms—especially of the autumnal plants, lobelias, dahlias, &c. which may almost be called semi-aquatic, so fond are they of water—and robbing roses, honeysuckles, and even myrtles of their leaves,—the very watering, which is essential to their life, brings a host of enemies above ground and beneath, in the

of flowers, have yet, under the influence of the drought, and the heat, and the glare of the sunshine, been longing all day to be lying under the great oak by the pool, at our own old place, looking through the green green leaves, at the blue blue sky, and listening to the cattle as they plashed in the water; or better still, to be in Mr. Lawson's little boat—that boat which is the very model of shape and make, rowed by that boatman of boatmen, and companion of companions, and friend of friends, up his own Loddon river, from the fishing-house at Aberleigh, his own beautiful Aberleigh, under the turfy terraces and majestic avenues of the park, and through that world of still, peaceful, and secluded water meadows, where even the shy kingfisher, who retires before cultivation and population with the instinct of the Red Indian, is not afraid to make her nest, until we approach as nearly as in rowing we can approach to the main spring head (for, like the Nile, the Loddon

shape of birds of all sorts pecking after worms, and moles out of number following the watering-pot. We have caught four of these burrowing creatures to-day in my little garden.

has many sources) of that dark, clear, and brimming river ;)—or, best perhaps of all, to be tossing about as we were last Wednesday, on the lake at Gore Mount, sailing, not rowing—that was too slow for our ambition—sailing at the rate of ten knots an hour, under the guidance of the gallant Captain Lumley, revelling in the light breeze and the inspiring motion, delighted with the petty difficulties and the pleasant mistakes of our good-humoured crew—landsmen who did not even understand the language of their brave commander — now touching at an island, now weathering a cape, enjoying to its very height the varied loveliness of that loveliest spot, and only lamenting that the day *would* close, and that we *must* land. I for my part could have been content to have floated on that lake for ever.

Far be it from me, who have been all the morning longing, panting as it were, for the water, for its freshness, its coolness, its calm repose, its vivid life, to depreciate water-parties! And yet, in this fickle climate of ours, where a warm summer is one rarity, and a dry summer is another, they are not often

found to answer. To have a boat and a river as Mr. Lawson has, and his own thews and sinews for rowing, and his own good-will for the choice of time; or to command, as they do at Gore Mount, lake and boat and boatmen,* and party, so as to catch the breeze and the sunshine, and the humour and inclination of the company; to have, in short, the power of going when you like and how you like,—is the true way to enjoy the water. In a set expedition, arranged a week or ten days beforehand, the weather is commonly wet, or it is cold, or it is showery, or it is thundery, or it threatens to be one or other of these bad things: and the aforesaid weather having no great reputation, those of the party who pique themselves on prudence shake their heads, and tap their barometers, and hum and ha, and finally stay at home. Or even if the weather be favourable, and the people well-assorted, (which by the bye seldom happens,) twenty accidents may happen to derange the pleasure of the day. One of the most promising parties of that kind

* Not indeed the captain: that was an accidental felicity.

which I remember, was entirely upset by the casualty of casting anchor for dinner in the neighbourhood of three wasps' nests. Moving afterwards did no good, though in mere despair move of course we did. The harpies had got scent of the food, and followed and ate, and buzzed and stung, and poisoned all the comfort of the festival. There was nothing for it but to fling the dinner into the river, and row off home as fast as possible. And even if these sort of mishaps could be guarded against (which they cannot), boating is essentially a youthful amusement. The gentlemen should be able to row upon occasion, and the ladies to sing; and a dance on the green is as necessary an accessory to a water-party as a ballet to an opera.

Now, as in spite of some occasional youthful visiter, some unlucky god-daughter, or much-to-be-pitied niece, the good ladies of Belford — those who formed its most select and exclusive society — were, it must be confessed, mostly of that age politely called uncertain, but which is to every eye, practised or unpractised, one of the most certain in the world;

they did very wisely to eschew excursions on the broad river. Nobody not very sure of being picked up, should ever put herself in danger of falling overboard. No lady not sure of being listened to, should ever adventure the peril of a squall. Accordingly, they stuck firmly to *terra firma*.

The selection of places for a land expedition presented, however, considerable difficulties. One would have thought that the fair garrison of Belford might have made a sortie through any gate of the town, pretty much as it happened, sure of meeting everywhere good roads and pleasant spots in a country full of green pastoral valleys watered by clear winding streams, of breezy downs and shady woodlands. There was, however, always considerable hesitation, doubt, and delay in fixing on the favoured scene of their tranquil amusement. Perhaps this difficulty made a part of the pleasure, by prolonging the discussion and introducing those little interludes of *tracasserie*, and canvassing, and opposition—those pretty mockeries of care, which they who have no real trouble are often

found to delight in, stirring the tranquil waters of a too calm existence, and setting intentionally the puddle in a storm.

"Why, if the castle be too far," grumbled Miss Arabella Morris to her sister, "why not go to the gardens at Wyndhurst? I dare say we could have our dinner in the Fishing-seat; and anything would be better than that tiresome Warren House, where we have been for the last half-dozen years, and where there is no reason on earth for our going that I can discover, except that Mrs. Colby's maid's father keeps the lodge, and that Dr. Fenwick likes the stewed carp. Why should we be managed by Mrs. Colby, I wonder? For my part, I have a great mind not to join the party."

"Only think of our going to the Warren House again!" said Lady Dixon, the not over rich widow of a corporation knight, to her cousin Miss Bates, who lived with her as a sort of humble companion; "only think of that odious Warren House, when the Ruins are but three miles farther, and so much more agreeable—a pic-nic in the old walls!—how nice that would be this hot weather, among the ivy

and ash trees, instead of being stewed up in the Warren House, just to please Mrs. Colby! It would serve her right if we were all to stay at home."

And Miss Bates gave, as usual, a dutiful assent; and yet Mrs. Colby had her way, and to the Warren House they went — the two Misses Morris, Miss Blackall, Miss Bates, Lady Dixon, Mrs. Colby herself, and the beaux of the party.

Mrs. Colby was one of those persons whose indomitable self-will does contrive to carry all before it. She was a little bustling woman, neither young nor old, neither pretty nor ugly; not lady-like, and yet by no means vulgar; certainly not well-read, but getting on all the better for her want of information,—not, as is the usual way, by pleading ignorance, and exaggerating and lamenting her deficiency—but by a genuine and masterful contempt of acquirement in others, which made educated people, if they happened to be modest, actually ashamed of their own cultivation: "I'm no musician, thank God! Heaven be praised, I know nothing of poetry!" exclaimed Mrs. Colby; and her abash-

ed hearers felt they had nothing to do but to "drown their books," and shut up the piano.

For this influence she was indebted entirely to her own force of character and her natural shrewdness of mind; since, so far were her pretensions to superiority from being borne out by fortune or position, that, moderately endowed with the gifts of fortune as her companions were, she was probably by very much the poorest amongst them, living in paltry lodgings with one solitary maid-servant; whilst upon the very ticklish points of birth and gentility her claims were still more equivocal, she having now resided for ten years at Belford without any one having yet discovered more of her history than that she was a widow: what her husband had been, or who was her father—whether she came from the east, the west, the north, or the south, still remained a mystery. Nobody had even been lucky enough to find out her maiden name.

Of one thing her acquaintances were pretty sure,—that if her family and connexions had been such as to do her credit in society, Mrs. Colby was not the woman to keep them con-

cealed. Another fact appears to me equally certain,—that if any one of the gossiping sisterhood who applied themselves to the examination of her history had been half as skilful in such inquiries as herself, the whole story of her life—her birth, parentage and education—would have been laid open in a month. But they were simple inquisitors, bunglers in the great art of meddling with other people's concerns, and Mrs. Colby baffled their curiosity in the best of all ways—by seeming perfectly unconscious of having excited such a feeling.

So completely did she evade speaking of her own concerns (a subject which most people find particularly agreeable), that the fact of her widowhood had been rather inferred from the plain gold circlet on the third finger of the left hand, and a very rare and very slight mention of "poor Mr. Colby," than from any direct communication even to those with whom she was most intimate. Another fact was also inferred by a few shrewd observers, who found amusement in watching the fair lady's manœuvres,—namely, that although when occasionally speaking of "poor Mr. Colby's" tastes

and habits—such as his love of 'schalots with his beef-steak, and his predilection for red mullet — she had never failed to accompany those tender reminiscences with a decorous accompaniment of sighs and pensive looks, yet that she was by no means so devoted to the memory of her first husband, as to render her at all averse to the notion of a second. On the contrary, she was apparently exceedingly well disposed to pay that sort of compliment to the happiness she had enjoyed in one marriage, which is comprised in an evident desire to try her fate in another. Whatever might have been her original name, it was quite clear to nice observers, that she would not entertain the slightest objection to change that which she at present bore as soon as might be, provided always that the exchange were in a pecuniary point of view sufficiently advantageous.

Nice observers, as I have said, remarked this; but we are not to imagine that Mrs. Colby was of that common and vulgar race of husband-hunters, whose snares are so obvious, and whose traps are so glaring, that the simplest bird that ever was caught in a springe can

hardly fail to be aware of his danger. Our widow had too much tact for that. She went cautiously and delicately to work, advancing as stealthily as a parlour cat who meditates an attack on the cream-jug, and drawing back as demurely as the aforesaid sagacious quadruped, when she perceives that the treasure is too well guarded, and that her attempts will end in detection and discomfiture.

It was only by slight indications that Mrs. Colby's designs became suspected: — for instance, her neighbour, Mr. Selwood the attorney, lost his wife, and Mrs. Colby immediately became fond of children, spent a world of money in dolls and gingerbread, and having made herself popular amongst all the young ladies and gentlemen of Belford between the ages of eight and two, established a peculiar intimacy with Misses Mary and Eliza, and Masters John and Arthur Selwood; played at domino and cat's-cradle with the girls, at trap-ball and cricket with the boys; courted the nurse, was civil to the nursery-maid, and made as judicious an attack upon the papa's heart, through the medium of the children, as could

well be devised. She failed, probably because that worthy person, Mr. John Selwood, attorney-at-law, was not much troubled with the commodity commonly called a heart. He was a kind father and a good-humoured man; but matrimony was with him as much a matter of business as with Mrs. Colby, and, about fourteen months after the death of his wife, he brought home as his spouse a wealthy maiden from a distant county who was far from professing any inordinate love for children in general, and had never set eyes upon his, but who, nevertheless, made as good a step-mother as if she had played at trap-ball and cat's-cradle all the days of her life.

Her next attempt was on a young physician, a bachelor, whose sister, who had hitherto kept his house, was on the point of marriage—an opportunity that seemed too good to be lost, there being no axiom more current in society than the necessity of a wife to a medical man. Accordingly, she had a severe illness and a miraculous recovery; declared that the doctor's skill and assiduity had saved her life, became his *prôneuse* in all the Belford coteries,

got him two or three patients, and would certainly have caught her man, only that he happened to be Scotch, and was saved from the peril matrimonial by his national caution.

Then she fixed her eye on a recruiting officer, a man of some family and reputed fortune; but he was Irish, and the national instinct saved him.

Then she turned her attention towards Mr. Singleton, who, dear man, soon let her know, with his accustomed simplicity, that he could not possibly marry till he got a living.

Then she resumed her fondness for children, which had lain in abeyance since Mr. Selwood's affair, on the occasion of an ex-curate of St. Stephen's setting up a higher class of preparatory school; but it turned out that he took the school to enable him to marry a woman whom he loved—and so that card failed her.

Then she turned sickly again, (delicate is the more lady-like phrase,) in order to be cured by the ale of a rich old bachelor brewer, and went about the town crying up his XX, as she had formerly done the doctor's drugs; and then (for of course she did not catch the old

bachelor) she carried all Belford to buy bargains of a smart linendraper just set up in the market-place, and extolled his ribbons and muslins with as much unction as she had bestowed on the brewer's beer, or the physician's prescriptions, or Mr. Selwood's boys and girls; but all in vain! The linendraper played her the worst trick of all. He was married already—married before ever he saw Belford, or was patronised by Mrs. Colby. N.B.—I cannot help thinking that these two last conjectures are rather super-subtle, and hold with another particular friend of the lady's, (for they could only have been her very particular friends who watched with such amusement and recorded with such fidelity her several failures and mortifications,) that her attentions to the XX and the linendrapery might be accounted for on other grounds; and that a desire to obtain a certain green shawl under prime cost, and a barrel of strong beer for nothing, in both which objects she succeeded, would supply a reasonable and characteristic motive for her puffery in both cases.

One thing is certain: that after the series of

fruitless schemes which we have enumerated, Mrs. Colby seemed so far discouraged as to intermit, if not wholly relinquish, her designs on that ungrateful half of the creation called man, and to direct her entire attention to the softer-hearted and more impressible sex to which she herself belonged. Disappointed in love, she devoted herself, as the fashion is amongst ladies of her class, to an exclusive and by no means unprofitable friendship.

The friend on whom she pitched was one of the richest and simplest spinsters in all Belford. A good, harmless, comfortable woman, somewhat broader than she was high, round as a ball, smooth as satin, soft as silk, red as a rose, quiet as a dormouse, was Miss Blackall. Her age might be five-and-forty or thereabout; and to any one who knew her small wit and easy fortune, it was matter of some surprise that she should have lived so many years in the world without becoming, in some form or other, the prey of one of the many swindlers with which the age abounds. She had, however, always been under some sort of tutelage, and had hitherto been lucky in her

guardians. First of all, her father and mother took care of her; and, when they died, her brother and sister: they marrying, consigned her to a careful duenna, who bore the English title of lady's-maid; and, on her abdicating her post, Miss Blackall fell into the hands of Mrs. Colby.

The reason of Mrs. Tabitha's leaving a family over which she ruled with the absolute sway that in this country of freedom is so often conceded to a lady's-maid, (a race far more our mistresses than we are theirs,) was a quarrel with her lady's favourite parrot.

Vert-vert (for this accomplished feathered orator was named after the hero of Gresset's delightful poem) was a bird of singular acquirement and sagacity, almost rivalling the parrot of whom so curious and entertaining an account is given in Mr. Jesse's charming Gleanings in Natural History. There was a spirit of dialogue in Vert-vert's fluent talk which really implied his understanding what was said to him. Not only did he, like the Irish echo in the story, answer "Very well, I thank you," to "How d'ye do?" and so on with

hundred common questions—for that might proceed merely from an effort of memory—from his having (in theatrical phrase) a good study, and recollecting his cues as well as his part; but there was about him a power of holding a sustained and apparently spontaneous conversation, which might have occasioned much admiration, and some perplexity, in wiser women than Miss Blackall.

In the matter of personal identity he was never mistaken. He would call the whole household by name, and was never known to confound one individual with another. He was a capital mimic, and had the faculty, peculiar to that order of wits, of counterfeiting not merely tone and voice, and accent and expression, but even the sense or nonsense of the person imitated; spoke as if the same mind were acting upon the same organs, and poured forth not only such things as they had said, but such as they were likely to say. The good-natured twaddle and drawling non-ideas of his mistress, for instance, who had rather less sense and fewer words than an ordinary child of four years old; the sharp

acidity of Mrs. Tabitha, who, with everybody but her lady, and sometimes with her, was a shrew of the first water; the slip-slop and gossiping of the housemaid, the solemn self-importance of the cook, and the jargon and mingled simplicity and cunning of the black footman,—were all given to the life.

To the black footman Vert-vert had originally belonged, and it was mainly to the great fancy that Miss Blackall at first sight took to the bird, which on offering himself as a candidate for her service he had had the shrewdness to bring with him, that Pompey owed the honour and happiness of exhibiting his shining face and somewhat clumsy person in a flaming livery of white and scarlet and silver lace which set off his sooty complexion with all the advantage of contrast. She bought the bird and hired the man; and from the first instant that Vert-vert's gorgeous cage swung in her drawing-room, the parrot became her prime favourite, and Mrs. Tabitha's influence was sensibly diminished.

That this might occasion in the mind of

the soubrette an unusual portion of ill-will, (which amiable feeling we rational beings generally reserve for the benefit of our own species,) is beyond all manner of doubt; and the parrot—who, amongst his other extraordinary gifts, had his fancies and aversions, with cause and without, and loved and hated like any Christian—did not fail to return the compliment, and detested Mrs. Tabitha with all his heart. He was sure to bite her fingers whenever, in compliance with her lady's orders, she attempted to feed him; and mocked her, taunted her, and laughed at her in a manner which, as the unfortunate object of his jibes was wont to assert, was never heard of before in a feathered creature! Well was it for Vert-vert that the days of witchery were gone by, or most assuredly Tabitha would have arraigned him before the tribunals of the land, and have had him roasted, feathers and all, as something "no' canny"! I am far from certain that she, for her particular part, did not really suspect him of being something elfish or fiendish,—a sort of imp in disguise, sent into the world for her especial torment; and the

sable colour of his quondam master served to confirm the impression.

The immediate cause of offence was, it must be confessed, provoking enough. "Tabitha! Tabitha! Tabitha!" ejaculated the bird one day from his cage on the landing-place, as the damsel in question was ascending the stairs; "Tabitha, you 're an old fright!"

"What!" exclaimed the affronted damsel, remonstrating as if addressing a human being; "what is that you dare to say?"

"Look in the glass, Tabitha!" replied the parrot, swinging himself with great nonchalance in the sort of wire circle suspended from the centre of his large and commodious gilt cage: "Look in the glass, and you 'll see a cross-grained, squinting, shrivelled old fright!"

The allusion to her personal defects—for squint she did, and shrivelled, alas! she was —increased almost to frenzy the ire of the incensed damsel. "Say that again," retorted she, "and I 'll wring your head off!"

"Tabitha, you 're an old fright!" repeated the bird; "a sour, cross-grained, shrivelled old fright, Tabitha!" said Vert-vert swing-

ing and nodding, and swaying his neck from side to side; "Look in the glass Tabitha!"

And Tabitha was approaching the cage with dire intent, and Vert-vert might have rued his boldness, had not Miss Blackall from the drawing-room, and Pompey from the hall, rushed to the scene of contest, and rescued their favourite from the furious waiting-woman.

Too much irritated to be prudent, she at once gave her lady the choice of parting with herself or the parrot; and as there was no sort of comparison between the two in Miss Blackall's opinion, her warning was accepted and off she went — all the sooner because, during the short time she did stay in the house, her triumphant enemy continued to ejaculate, alternately, "Look in the glass, Tabitha!" and "Ugly, cross-grained, squinting old fright!"

How the bird came by these phrases was a mystery, — unless, indeed, Mrs. Colby, who wished the duenna away that she might succeed her in the management of her lady, might have had some hand in the business. Certain it was, that any sentence sharply and pungently spoken was pretty sure to be caught up by

this accomplished speaker, and that his poor inoffensive mistress had several times got into scrapes by his reporting certain disagreeable little things which happened to be said in his presence to the parties concerned. Vert-vert was the greatest scandal-monger in Belford; and everybody, except the persons aggrieved, cherished him accordingly.

From this time forth Mrs. Colby became a sort of guardianess to Miss Blackall. She slept, indeed, at her own lodgings, but she lived almost constantly with her friend; used her house, her carriage, her servants, her table; protected her from mercenary suitors, and seemed to have entirely relinquished in her favour her own matrimonial designs—the more readily, perhaps, as her attempts in that line had been so singularly unfortunate.

Thus passed several years. At the time, however, of the meditated country excursion, Mrs. Colby had just admitted into her ever-teeming brain another well-laid scheme for changing her condition; and the choice of the Warren House, at which the other ladies grumbled so much, was made, not for the gratification of her ser-

vant, whose family kept the house, but for the furtherance of her own plans, which were as yet wholly unsuspected in Belford.

Dr. Fenwick loved the stewed carp of the Warren House, and to propitiate Dr. Fenwick was at present the great object of Mrs. Colby, although he was about the last person whom she would ever have intended to honour with her hand, being almost as poor as herself, and with no very great prospect of ever being richer.

The doctor was a burly, pompous personage, with large features, a large figure, a big voice, a slow oracular mode of conversation, and a considerable portion of self-importance. What he could have been like when young, one can hardly imagine; nor was it very easy to guess at his present age, for ever since he first came to Belford, a dozen years before, he had seemed exactly the same heavy, parading, consequential Doctor Fenwick, with a buzz-wig and a shovel-hat, that he was at the moment of which we write. And yet this Strephon had been in his time as great a fortune-hunter as Mrs. Colby herself, and was said to have made in one week

four offers, three of them being to Lady Dixon and the two Misses Morris. The swain was, however, soon discouraged, and for many years appeared to have given up any design of making his fortune by matrimony as completely as Mrs. Colby herself.

For the rest, he was a good-natured man, with more sense than any one, judging from his egregious vanity, would have supposed. His way through life had been, although quite free from moral imputation, yet sufficiently out of the common course to hinder his professional advancement; since he had been originally an apothecary, then an army surgeon, then a physician with a Scotch diploma, and then, finding medicine unprofitable, he contrived through some channel of interest to get ordained, and now lived partly on his half-pay as army surgeon, and partly in officiating as an occasional preacher in the different parishes round about; for in the pulpit, although somewhat coarse, he was forcible and not ineloquent, and there was a kindness and a simplicity about the man, in the midst of his pomposity, his vanity, and his epicurean tastes,

which, together with his thorough inoffensiveness and his blameless character, ensured him considerable attention from the leading persons in the town. He had many old friends also of a respectable class in society, at whose houses he frequently made long visits; and one of these, a gentleman of the name of Musgrave, descended like the doctor from an old family in the North, was at this very time his visiter in Belford, and the object of Mrs. Colby's secret hopes.

Mr. Musgrave was really a delightful person; shrewd, acute, lively, rich, and not at all too young or too handsome to make the union preposterous on the score of appearance. Since his arrival, too, the gentlemen had been assiduous in their visits and attentions; they had dined at Miss Blackall's, in company with Mr. Singleton, the day before the excursion, and Vert-vert, aided it was to be presumed by a little prompting, had vociferated on their names being announced,—"He 's a fine preacher, Doctor Fenwick! Mr. Musgrave 's a charming man!"—at which Mrs. Colby had blushed and cried "Fie!" and the doctor had chuckled,

and the simple hostess had laughed, and Mr. Musgrave had given his friend a glance of much meaning; symptoms which were renewed more than once in the course of the evening, as the parrot, according to his general habit, was so pleased with his new phrase that he repeated it over and over again, until, fearing that even good, unsuspecting Mr. Singleton might take more notice than she wished, Mrs. Colby threw a green cloth over the cage, and the bird, after wishing the company "Good night!" composed himself to rest.

The next day was as fine as ever blessed an English party in chase of pleasure, and the company set forth in three carriages: Lady Dixon and Mr. Singleton in the Miss Morrises' coach; Mrs. Colby, with Miss Blackall, in her chariot; and Dr. Fenwick and Mr. Musgrave in a well-appointed curricle (the fashionable equipage of the day), belonging to the latter. Vert-vert and Miss Bates were left behind.

Arrived at the place of destination, the first business of this rural party was to discuss the stewed carp, the roast lamb, the ducks and green peas, and strawberries and cream, pro-

vided for their refreshment; their second was to enjoy, after their several ways, the beautiful scenery amongst which they found themselves. Mr. Singleton, Lady Dixon, and the Misses Morris preferred the mode of sitting down to a rubber in the close room in which they had dined; the other four sallied forth into the air, Mrs. Colby taking Mr. Musgrave's arm, and Miss Blackall leaning on the doctor.

The more alert and active pair soon outstripped their heavier companions, and led the way across a narrow strip of broken common, with old pollards scattered here and there, into a noble tract of woodland scenery, majestic oaks and elms and beeches rising from thickets of the weeping birch, the hornbeam, the hawthorn, and the holly, variegated with the briar rose and the wild honeysuckle, bordered with fern and foxglove, and terminated by a magnificent piece of water, almost a lake, whose picturesque shores, indented by lawny bays and wooded headlands, were as calm and tranquil as if the foot of man had never invaded their delicious solitude. Except the song of the wood-pigeon, the squirrel leaping from bough to bough overhead, and the shy rabbit darting

across the path, the silence was unbroken; and Mr. Musgrave and Mrs. Colby, who had the tact to praise, if not the taste to admire, the loveliness of the scene, found a seat on the fantastic roots of a great beech, and talked of the beauties of nature until summoned by the care of good Mr. Singleton to partake of a syllabub under the cow, with which the ruralities of the day were to conclude.

On their return home, a slight difference was proposed by Mr. Musgrave in their travelling arrangements: Mrs. Colby accompanied him in his curricle, and Dr. Fenwick took her place in Miss Blackall's carriage. The prospect seemed most promising:—but, alas for the vanity of human expectations! Mr. Musgrave did not propose to Mrs. Colby; and Dr. Fenwick, encouraged by Vert-vert's hint, did propose to Miss Blackall,—and was accepted on the spot, and married within the month; and poor Mrs. Colby was fain to smother her disappointment, and smile through the bridal festivities, and teach Vert-vert to drink to the new-married couple, and draw bride-cake through the wedding-ring.

THE YOUNG SCULPTOR.

For some time after the dreadful catastrophe of the poor Abbé, the Friary Cottage was deserted by all except Mrs. Duval and poor Louis. The vulgar appetite for the horrible, in all its ghastly and disgusting detail, had not been so fully awakened then as it has been since by repeated exhibitions of murder in melo-dramas on the stage, and even in penny and twopenny shows at fairs and revels—or by the still more exciting particulars (with woodcuts to illustrate the letter-press) in the Sunday papers: Belford was too far from London to attract the hordes of inquisitive strangers, who flocked from the metropolis to Elstree, to contemplate the lane where Thurtell slew his victim, or the house where the dreadful scene was planned; and, to do the inhabitants of our town justice, the popular

feeling both there and in the neighbourhood was one comprising too much of genuine pity for the good old man, so inoffensive, so kind, and so defenceless—too much indignation against his murderer, and too sincere a sympathy with his avengers, (for as such Louis and Bijou were considered,) to admit of the base alloy of vulgar curiosity. Everybody would have been glad, to be sure, to make acquaintance with the boy and the dog who had cut so distinguished a figure in the justice-room,—to know, and, if possible, to serve them; but there was a sort of respect—young lad and pastry-cook's son though he were—which forbade an intrusion on a grief so deep and so recent; so that the gentry contented themselves with raising a handsome subscription for the boy, and patronising his mother in the way of her trade; whilst the common people, satisfied their feeling of justice by attending the execution of Wilson, and purchasing and commenting on the "last dying speech and confession," which was written, and printed, and distributed for sale by some ingenious speculator in such commodities the

night before it purported to be spoken, and some copies actually vended in the country villages, owing to a mistake of the time of execution, some hours before the criminal was brought out upon the scaffold. Having so assuaged their indignation, the excitement gradually subsided, and the murder of the poor priest sank into oblivion, like other tales of horror, a mere nine days' wonder! One impression only seemed permanent: a shuddering aversion to pass at night, or even by day, the picturesque ruins amongst which he had dwelt, and in the consecrated grounds belonging to which his remains, in pursuance of a wish which he had expressed only a few weeks before the fatal night, had been interred. The persons who avoided the spot would have been puzzled to tell why, for it had been a favourite rendezvous with the inhabitants of Belford—a walk for the grown-up, a play-ground for the children; why they shunned it they could hardly have told, unless they had answered, in the words of the great poet, that

"Something ail 'd it now—the place was cursed."

Mrs. Duval fretted over this desertion; not

so much from any decline in her business, for from the large orders of the neighbouring gentry she had as much as she could well manage; but because her cheerful and social disposition felt the loneliness oppressive. It almost seemed, she said, as if the folk ran away from her; besides, she thought it too melancholy, (*unked* was her word—and a most expressive word it is, combining loneliness, melancholy, dreariness, and vacuity—a more intense and positive feeling of mental weariness than *ennui*,) she thought it too unked for a boy of Louis' age, and wished to take advantage of her improved circumstances, and remove into the interior of the town, where her son would be near an excellent day-school, at which she proposed to place him, and would be in the way of cheerful society in an evening. But Louis, with an obstinacy very unlike his general character, positively refused to leave the Friary Cottage. The violence of his grief had of course abated after the detection and the execution of the murderer, and more particularly after he had ascertained, not merely from Wilson's confession, but from the corroborating testimony of

Miss Smith's maid, that her carelessly mentioning in a shop to which she was sent to get change for a five-pound note, that her mistress wanted gold to make up the amount of some money, which she was going to pay to the old French master, had been overheard by this ruffian, who was himself in the shop making some small purchase, and had been the actual cause of the murder. This discovery was an indescribable relief to Louis, who had been haunted by the fear that his own dear mother's unguarded expressions of terror at M. l'Abbé's intended return at night, and with a charge of money, after her repeated cautions and her dream, which story she had related at full length to every creature whom she had seen during the day, had in some way or other been the occasion of this horrible catastrophe. To be so fully assured that her indiscretion had not produced this tremendous result, proved an unspeakable comfort to the thoughtful and sensitive boy; but still his grief, although it had changed its violent and tumultuous character, and seemed fast settling into a fixed though gentle melancholy,

appeared rather to increase than diminish. He shrunk from society of all kinds, especially the company of children, and evidently suffered so much both in mind and body when forced from his beloved solitude, that his fond mother, fearful of risking the health, if not the life, of this precious and only child, at length desisted from the struggle and left him to pursue his own inclinations in peace, much to the annoyance of Stephen Lane, who, having taken a great fancy to the boy, from the part he had acted in the discovery of the poor Abbé's body, and the detection of the murderer, had resolved to be his friend through life, and wished to begin his kindness at that very *now*, by putting him to school, or binding him apprentice, and gave the preference to the latter mode of proceeding.

"Talk of his delicacy!" exclaimed the good butcher to poor Mrs. Duval, in a loud earnest tone, which, kind as his meaning was, and good-humoured as was the speaker, did certainly sound a little like the voice of a man in a passion. "His delicacy, forsooth! Won't your coddling make him more delicate? Delicacy!

Nobody ever talked of such nonsense when I was a youngster. Why, before I was his age, I was head-boy with old Jackson, my wife's father that now is, — used to be up between three and four of a morning, and down to the yard to help the men slaughter the beasts; then back again to the Butts, to open the windows and sweep the shop; then help cut out; then carry home the town orders;—I should like to see Louis with such a tray of meat upon his head as I used to trot about with and think nothing of it! — then carry out the country orders, galloping with my tray before me like mad, ay, half over the county at a sweep; then drive the cart to fetch home the calves; then see to the horses; then feed the beasts; then shut up shop; then take a scamper through the streets for my own diversion; go to bed as fresh as a four-year-old, and sleep like a top. There's a day's work for you! Just send Louis down to the Butts, and I'll make a man of him; take him 'prentice for nothing, feed and clothe and lodge him, and mayhap, by and bye, give him a share of the business. Only send him to me."

"But, Mr. Lane," interposed Mrs. Duval, "poor Louis does not like butchering; he has not the heart to kill a worm, and would never do in that line of business, I'm sure."

"More fool he!" ejaculated Stephen. "Heart, indeed! As if butchers were harder-hearted than other folk! I'll tell you what, Mrs. Duval, no good will come to the boy whilst you let him sit moping all day with a book in his hand amongst those ruins. Move yourself off! Get into the middle of the town, and wean him from that dismal place altogether. Delicate, quotha! Well he may, such a life as he leads there, sitting upon the poor old man's grave along with the little dog, just like two figures on a tombstone. As to the poor brute, I don't blame him, because 'tis his instinct, poor dumb thing, and he can't help it; but Louis can—or you can for him, if you will. Dang it!" continued the honest butcher, warming as he pursued his harangue; "dang it! you women folk are all alike, young and old. There is my daughter Bessy—I caught her this very morning coaxing young Master Stephen to let the maid wash him, and my young gentleman

squalled, and kicked, and roared, and would have coaxed and scolded, if he could but ha' spoke; and mother, and grandmother, and nurse, were all going to put off the washing till another time, for fear of throwing the urchin into fits, he being delicate, forsooth! when I came in and settled the matter, by whipping up young master, and flinging him into the water-tub in the yard before you could say 'Jack Robinson;' and Dr. Davies says I was right, and that my sousing will do the boy more good than all their coddling with warm water. So the young gentleman is to be ducked every morning, and the doctor says that in a month he'll have cheeks like a rose. Now this is what you should do with Louis."

"What! duck him?" inquired Mrs. Duval, smiling.

"No, woman!" replied Stephen, waxing wroth, "but get away from this dreary place, and fling him amongst other boys. Put him to school for a year or two, if he is such a fool as not to like the butchering line; I'll pay the expense, and we'll see what else we can put him to when he's of a proper age. Only leave that

old Friary. No good can come to either of you whilst you stay there."

"Well, and I wish to leave the ruins, I assure you, Mr. Lane, and I cannot thank you enough for your kindness towards Louis," returned the affectionate mother; "but the poor boy falls sick if he's taken away for a day; and then sometimes I think he may be right, on account of my dream."

"Your dream!" exclaimed Stephen. "Is the woman mad?"

"Did you never hear," resumed Mrs. Duval, taking no notice of this civil ejaculation, "that I dreamt of Louis' finding a pot of gold in the ruins? and you know how true my dream about the wolves falling upon the poor Abbé turned out—so that I sometimes think——"

"The woman's crazy!" interrupted Mr. Lane, sailing off; for this discussion had taken place at the small gate leading up to the cottage;—"she 's madder than a March hare! one might as well attempt to drive a herd of wild bulls along the turnpike road, as to bring her round to common sense; so she may manage matters

her own way, for I've done with her:" and off marched Stephen Lane.

His description of Louis and Bijou was not much unlike the truth. The faithful dog, with the remarkable instinct which characterises his race, lay for hours and hours on the simple flag-stone marked only with his name and the date of his death (that of his birth being unknown) which covered the remains of his master. And, reclining beside him on the same stone, sat his equally faithful companion, sometimes reading one of the good Abbé's books, which, unclaimed by any relation, and no will having been found, had been consigned by the local authorities to the care of Mrs. Duval; sometimes pursuing, with irregular but successful ardour, the studies marked out for him by his venerable instructor; and often sketching designs for a monument, which it was the object of his affectionate day-dreams to erect to his memory. Gradually, however, his designs extended to other objects. Louis' talent for drawing was remarkable; and as he had inherited a little of his mother's superstí-

tion—and encouraged, it may be, in the present instance, by the verification of the bad dream, had formed his own version of the good — the pencil soon became his principal occupation. If Stephen Lane had heard to the end the story of dreaming of a pot of gold, and finding an old paint-pot, and had happened to have had any faith in the legend, he would have construed it differently, and have bound Louis upon the spot either to a glazier and house-painter, or to an oil and colourman : but the boy, as I said before, put his private interpretation on the vision, and as prophecies sometimes work their own accomplishment, so did it bid fair to prove in this case, since by repeated and assiduous and careful copying of the romantic buildings and the fine natural scenery about him, he was laying the foundation of an artist's education, by at once acquiring facility and certainty of drawing, and a taste for the beautiful and the picturesque. Thus occupied, and with the finest books in French literature—and Louis read French like English, and some of the easier classics to occupy him — he never had dared to open the

Horace, which seemed like a sacred legacy, —days and weeks passed on, and, with no apparent change in the habits, a silent amelioration was taking place in the mind of the pensive boy, on whom time was working its usual healing effect, taking the sting from grief and the bitterness from memory, ("the strong hours conquer us"—why should we resist them?) when a circumstance occurred, which tended more than anything could have done to divert his attention and soothe his sorrow. A new lodger offered himself at the Friary Cottage, and of all the lodgers that could have been devised, one the most congenial to his disposition, and the most calculated to foster and encourage his predominant pursuit.

He was sitting among the ruins as usual, one fine morning early in May, attempting for the twentieth time to imitate on paper the picturesque forms, and the contrasted yet harmonious colouring of a broken arch garlanded with ivy, whose dark shining wreaths had straggled from the old stone-work to a tall pear-tree in full blossom that overhung it, breaking with its pale green leaves and its ivory blossoms the

deep blue of the almost cloudless sky,—when his mother called him to a young gentleman, who wished, she said, to sketch the great window, and who, after sufficient conversation with her to prove his good breeding and good feeling, sat down to the task which had so often taxed the poor boy's simple skill. The stranger brought to it talent, practice, taste. The work grew under his hand, and in two hours, which seemed but two minutes to Louis, to whom he had been talking most kindly during the greater part of the time, he produced a drawing, free, vigorous, and masterly beyond any that his youthful admirer had ever beheld.

"You must be a great artist!" exclaimed the boy involuntarily, returning the sketch after a long examination, his eyes sparkling and his cheeks glowing with generous fervour; "for, as young as you look, you must be some great painter."

"Not a painter certainly, nor a great artist," replied the stranger, smiling. "I am a young sculptor, or rather a student of sculpture, driven by medical advice into the country, and in search of some cheap, quiet, airy lodging;—

if your apartments are vacant, and your mother would venture to take into her house an unknown youth—" And in five minutes the affair was settled, and Henry Warner established as an inhabitant of the Friary Cottage.

To a boy like Louis the companionship of such a person as Henry Warner — for in spite of the differences of station, age, and acquirement, companions they speedily became—proved not only an almost immediate cure for his melancholy, but an excellent although unconscious education.

The young sculptor was that rare thing, a man of genius, and of genius refined and heightened by cultivation. His father had been a clerk in a public office, and having only one other child, an elder daughter comfortably married in her own rank of life, he devoted all that could be spared of his own income to the improvement of his promising boy, sending him first to a public school, then to the Royal Academy, and from thence to Italy; but even at the moment that he was rejoicing over a printed letter dated Rome, which mentioned Henry Warner as likely to become a second Canova,

apoplexy, caused perhaps by the very excess of pleasurable excitement, seized him with that one fatal, and therefore merciful grasp, with which that tremendous disease sometimes sweeps away the hardiest and the strongest. He died, leaving his beloved son to struggle with the penury which he was by nature and by temperament peculiarly unfitted either to endure or to surmount.

On his return to England, Henry found himself alone in the world. His mother had long been dead; and his sister, a well-meaning but vulgar-minded person, differing from him in appearance, intellect, and character—as we so often see, yet always with something like surprise, in children of the same parents—and married to a man still coarser than herself, had no thought or feeling in common with him; could not comprehend his hopes, and was more than half tempted to class his habits of patient observation, of strenuous thought, and of silent study, under the one sweeping name of idleness. She could not understand the repetition of effort and of failure which so often lead to the highest excellence; and, disappointed

in the sympathy of his only relation—the sympathy which above all others would have soothed him, our young artist, after collecting the small remains of his father's property, withdrew from a house where he suspected himself to be no longer welcome, and plunged at once into the mighty sea of London.

His first outset was unexpectedly prosperous. A nobleman of acknowledged taste, whom he had met at Rome, not only purchased a bust of the Grecian Helen, in which he found or fancied a resemblance to his youngest and favourite child, but engaged him to accompany his family to their country seat, and execute a group of his two daughters, then on the point of marriage.

The group was most successfully begun—one figure quite finished, and the other nearly so, and the nuptials of the elder sister were celebrated with all due splendour, and adorned by the varied talents of the accomplished sculptor, who united strong musical taste to a slight turn for lyrical poetry, and poured forth his united gifts with unbounded prodigality on this happy occasion. But, a few

days before that fixed for the marriage of the young and lovely Lady Isabel, the artist, whose manner had latterly assumed a reckless gaiety little in accordance with his gentle and modest character, suddenly quitted the Hall, leaving behind him the fine work of art, now so near its completion, and a letter to the Earl, which excited strange and mingled feelings in the breast of his noble patron. "Wayward, presumptuous, yet honourable boy!" was his internal exclamation, as the open and artless questions of the unconscious Isabel, who wondered with a pretty and almost childish innocence why a person whom she liked so much should leave her figure unfinished and run away from her wedding, convinced the anxious father that the happiness of his favourite child was uninjured. The nuptials were solemnised; the noble family returned to Italy; and Henry Warner, retiring to his London lodgings, strove to bury thought and recollection in an entire and absorbing devotion to his great and noble art.

From this point, his history was but a series of misfortunes—of trembling hopes, of bitter

disappointments, of consuming anxiety, and final despair. Every one knows the difficulty with which excellence in art bursts, often as it seems by some casual accident, through the darkness of obscurity and the crowd of competition. Doubtless many a one has felt, as Henry Warner felt, the aching, burning consciousness of unrecognised genius—the agonizing aspiration after the fame, always within view, yet always eluding his pursuit. Mr. Moore, in one of the finest songs that even he ever wrote, has depicted a glittering vessel, laden with fairy treasures, sailing lightly over a summer sea, followed by a little boat, rowed by one single mariner, closely chasing yet never overtaking the phantom bark. The sun rises and the sun sets, and still sees the magic ship floating onward, and the solitary boatman labouring after at one unvaried distance, ever near but never nearer—wearing away life and strength for an illusion that mocks whilst it allures. That lonely mariner might be the type of many an artist of high but unacknowledged talent, more especially of many a young sculptor, since in that pure and lofty branch of art there is no room

for second-rate merit, no middle path between hopeless obscurity and splendid reputation.

To attain to this proud eminence was not the destiny of Henry Warner. With funds almost exhausted, a broken constitution, and a half-broken heart, he left the great city—so dreary and so desolate to those who live alone, uncheered by bosom sympathy, unsoothed by home affection—and retired to Belford, as his medical adviser said, to recruit his health—as his own desponding spirit whispered, to die!

At the Friary Cottage he found unexpected comfort. The quiet was delightful to him; the situation, at once melancholy and picturesque, fell in with his taste and his feelings; and with the cheerful kindness of Mrs. Duval and the ardent admiration of her enthusiastic boy it was impossible not to be gratified.

Henry was himself one of those gifted persons who seem born to command affection. The griefs that were festering at the core, never appeared upon the surface. There all was gentle, placid, smiling, almost gay; and the quickness with which he felt, and the sweetness with which he acknowledged, any

trifling attention, would have won colder hearts than those of Louis and his mother. The tender charm of his smile and the sunny look of his dark eyes were singularly pleasing, and, without being regularly handsome, his whole countenance had a charm more captivating than beauty. Sweetness and youthfulness formed its prevailing expression, as grace was the characteristic of his slight and almost boyish figure; although a phrenologist would have traced much both of loftiness and power in the Shakspearian pile of forehead and the finely-moulded head.

His conversation was gentle and unpretending, and occasionally, when betrayed into speaking on his own art, fervent and enthusiastic. But he talked little, as one who had lived much alone, preferring to turn over the French and Latin books of which the poor Abbé's small library consisted, or buried in "Hayley's Essay on Sculpture," a chance-found volume, of which not merely the subject, but the feelings under which the poem was written, particularly interested him;* or forming plans for new

* The Letters on Sculpture were addressed to Flaxman,

works, which, under the temporary revival caused by change of scene and of air, he in his happier moments began to think it possible that he might live to complete.

His great pleasure, however, was in rambling with Louis through the lanes and meadows, now in the very prime and pride of May, green and flowery to the eye, cool and elastic to the tread, fresh and fragrant to the scent, pleasant to every sense; or in being rowed by him in a

whose pupil, Thomas Hayley, the poet's only son, was during the time of their composition rapidly declining of a lingering and painful disease. He did actually die between the completion and the publication of the poem; and the true and strong expression of the father's grief for the sufferings and death of this amiable and promising youth, is to me singularly affecting. It is very old-fashioned to like the writings of Hayley, who paid in the latter part of his career the usual penalty for having been over-praised in his earlier days, and is now seldom mentioned but as an object of ridicule and scorn; but, set aside the great and varied learning of his notes, I cannot help feeling some kindness for the accomplished and elegant scholar who in his greater works, the Essays on History, on Epic Poetry, on Painting, and on Sculpture, has communicated, so agreeably, so rich a store of information, and whose own observations are always so just, so candid, so honourable—so full of a tempered love of liberty, and of the highest and purest admiration for all that is great and beautiful in literature or in art.

little boat (and Louis was a skilful and indefatigable waterman) amongst the remotest recesses of the great river; between beech-woods with the sunbeams wandering with such an interchange of light and shadow over the unspeakable beauty of their fresh young tops;—or through narrow channels hemmed in by turfy hills and bowery islets, beautiful solitudes from which the world and the world's woe seemed excluded, and they and their little boat sole tenants of the bright water, into whose bosom the blue sky shone so peacefully, and whose slow current half seemed to bear along the slender boughs of the weeping willow as they stooped to kiss the stream.

In such a scene as this, Henry's soothed spirit would sometimes burst into song—such song as Louis fondly thought no one had ever heard before. It was in truth a style of singing as rare as it was exquisite, in which effect was completely sacrificed to expression, and the melody, however beautiful, seemed merely an adjunct to the most perfect and delicious recitation. Perhaps none but the writer of the words (and yet, considered as poetry, the words

were trifling enough) could have afforded to make that round and mellow voice, and that consummate knowledge of music, that extraordinary union of taste and execution, so entirely secondary to the feeling of the verse.

One great charm of Henry's singing was its spontaneity—the manner in which, excited by the merest trifle, it gushed forth in the middle of conversation, or broke out after a long silence. "How sweetly that skylark sings!" cried Louis one morning, laying aside his oar that he might listen at his ease — "and the deep-soothing cooing of the wood-pigeon, and the sighing of the wind, and the rippling of the waters! How delightful are all natural sounds!"

"Ay," rejoined Henry—

"There is a pure and holy spell
In all sweet sounds on earth that dwell:
The pleasant hum of the early bee,
As she plies her cheerful industry;
The whir of the mail'd beetle's wing,
Sailing heavily by at evening;
And the nightingale, so poets say,
Wooing the rose in his matchless lay.

There is a pure and holy spell
In all sweet sounds on earth that dwell:

"The Indian shell, whose faithful strain
Echoes the song of the distant main;
The streamlet gurgling through the trees,
The welcome sigh of the cool night-breeze;
The cataract loud, the tempest high,
Hath each its thrilling melody."

"Yes," continued Louis, after warmly thanking the singer—for though the matter was little, the manner was much—"Yes! and how much beauty there is in almost every scene, if people had but the faculty, not of looking for it—that were too much to expect—but of seeing it when it lies before them. Look at the corner of that meadow as it comes sloping down to the water, with the cattle clustered under the great oak, and that little thicket of flowery hawthorn and shining holly, and golden-blossomed broom, with the tangled sheepwalk threading it, and forming a bower fit for any princess."

Again Henry answered in song.

"She lay beneath the forest shade
As midst its leaves a lily fair—
Sleeping she lay, young Kalasrade,
Nor dreamt that mortal hover'd there.
All as she slept, a sudden smile
Play'd round her lips in dimpling grace,
And softest blushes glanced the while
In roseate beauty o'er her face;

And then those blushes pass'd away
From her pure cheek, and Kalasrade
Pale as a new-blown lily lay,
Slumbering beneath the forest shade!

Oh! lovely was that blush so meek,
That smile half playful, half demure,
And lovelier still that pallid cheek—
That look so gentle yet so pure.
I left her in her purity,
Slumbering beneath the forest glade;
I fear'd to meet her waking eye,
The young, the timid Kalasrade.
I left her; yet by day, by night,
Dwells in my soul that image fair,
Madd'ning as thoughts of past delight,
As guilty hope, as fierce despair."

"Is that subject quite imaginary?" Louis at last ventured to inquire, taking care, however, from an instinctive delicacy that he would have found it difficult to account for, to resume his oar and turn away from Henry as he spoke — "or did you ever really see a sleeping beauty in a bower, such as I was fancying just now?"

"It is and it is not imaginary, Louis," replied Henry, sighing deeply; "or rather, it is a fancy piece, grounded, as rhymes and pictures often are, on some slight foundation of

truth. Wandering in the neighbourhood of Rome, I strayed accidentally into the private grounds of an English nobleman, and saw a beautiful girl sleeping as I have described under a bay-tree, in the terraced Italian garden. I withdrew as silently as possible, the more so as I saw another young lady, her sister, approaching, who, in endeavouring to dispose a branch of the bay-tree, so as to shelter the fair sleeper from the sun, awakened her."

"What a subject for a group!" exclaimed Louis. "Did you never attempt to model the two sisters?"

"It is a fine subject," replied Henry; "and it has been attempted, but not completed. Do you not remember singling out a sketch of the recumbent figure, the other day, when you were turning over my drawings?"

"Yes, and saying how like it was to the exquisite bust marked 'ΕΛΕΝΗ.—Helena! But all your female figures are more or less like that Helen. She is your goddess of beauty."

"Perhaps so," rejoined Henry. "But where are we now? Is this the old church of Cas-

tlebar which you were promising to show me, with its beautiful tower, and the great yew-trees? Yes, it must be. You are right in your admiration, Louis. That tower is beautiful, with its fine old masonry, the quaint fantastic brickwork left, to the honour of the rector's taste, in the rich tinting of its own weather-stains, undaubed by whitewash, and contrasting so gracefully with the vivid foliage of that row of tall limes behind. A strange tree for a churchyard, Louis, the honeyed, tasseled lime! And yet how often we see it there blending with the dark funereal yew—like life with death! I should like to be buried there."

"Nay," said Louis, "a churchyard is sometimes devoted to gayer purposes than burials. Hark! even now!" and as he spoke the bells struck up a merry peal, the church-door opened, and the little procession of a rustic wedding, —the benign clergyman looking good wishes, the smirking clerk, the hearty jolly bridal-father, the simpering bride-maidens, the laughing bridesmen—and the pretty, blushing, modest bride, listening with tearful smiles to the fond

and happy lover-husband, on whose arm she hung—issued from the porch. "I should like just such a wife as that myself," added Louis, talking of marrying as a clever boy of thirteen likes to talk;* "should not you?"

But Henry made no answer—he was musing on another wedding; and after a silence of some duration, in the course of which they had rowed away almost out of hearing of the joyous peal that still echoed merrily from the church tower, he broke again into song.

"Forth the lovely bride ye bring:
Gayest flowers before her fling,
From your high-piled baskets spread,
Maidens of the fairy tread!

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* It was somewhere about that ripe age that a very clever friend of mine, travelling in the North with a young clergyman, his private tutor, wrote to his mother a letter beginning as follows:—

"Gretna Green, Thursday.

"My dear mother,—Here we are, in the very land of love and matrimony; and it is a thousand pities that my little wife is not here with us, for Mr. G. being at hand, we could strike up a wedding without loss of time, and my father and Mr. D. would have nothing to do but to settle the income and the dowry at their leisure." So lightly are those matters considered at thirteen! At three-and-thirty, the case is altered.

Strew them far and wide, and high,
A rosy shower 'twixt earth and sky,
Strew about! strew about!
Larkspur trim, and poppy dyed,
And freak'd carnation's bursting pride,
Strew about! strew about!
Dark-eyed pinks, with fringes light,
Rich geraniums, clustering bright,
Strew about! strew about!
Flaunting pea, and harebell blue,
And damask-rose, of deepest hue,
And purest lilies, Maidens, strew!
Strew about, strew about!

Home the lovely bride ye bring:
Choicest flowers before her fling
Till dizzying steams of rich perfume
Fill the lofty banquet room!
Strew the tender citron there,
The crush'd magnolia proud and rare,
Strew about! strew about!
Orange blossoms newly dropp'd,
Chains from high acacia cropp'd,
Strew about! strew about!
Pale musk-rose, so light and fine
Cloves and stars of jessamine,
Strew about! strew about!
Tops of myrtle, wet with dew,
Nipp'd where the leaflets sprout anew,
Fragrant bay-leaves, Maidens, strew,
Strew about! strew about!" *

* This song and one or two of the others belong to tw forthcoming operas, already set to music under the auspices

Louis was about to utter some expression of admiration, which the ringing, air, and the exquisite taste and lightness of the singing, well deserved, when he perceived that the artist, absorbed in his own feelings and recollections, was totally unconscious of his presence. Under the influence of such associations, he sang, with a short pause between them, the two following airs:

"They bid me strike the harp once more,
My gayest song they bid me pour,
In pealing notes of minstrel pride
They bid me hail Sir Hubert's bride.
Alas! alas! the nuptial strain
Faltering I try and try in vain;
'Twas pleasant once to wake its spell—
But not for Lady Isabel.

They bid me vaunt in lordly lay
Sir Hubert's mien and spirit gay,
His wide demesnes and lineage high,
And all the pride of chivalry.
Alas! alas! the knightly lay
In trembling murmurs dies away;
'Twere sweet the warrior's fame to tell—
But not to Lady Isabel.

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of the authoress. She has thought it right to mention this fact to prevent the possibility of their being selected for such an honour by any other composer.

They bid me blend in tenderest song
The lover's fears, unutter'd long,
With the bold bridegroom's rapturous glee,
And vows of endless constancy.
Alas! alas! my voice no more
Can tale of happy passion pour;
To love, to joy, a long farewell!—
Yet blessings on thee, Isabel!"

"Bless thee! I may no longer stay!
No longer bid thee think on me;
I cannot 'bide thy bridal day—
But, Helen, I go blessing thee.

Bless thee! no vow of thine is broke;
I ask'd not thy dear love for me;
Though tears, and sighs, and blushes spoke—
Yet, Helen, I go blessing thee.

Bless thee! yet do not quite forget;
Oh, sometimes, sometimes pity me!
My sun of life is early set—
But, Helen, I die blessing thee."

And then the minstrel sank into a silence too sad and too profound for Louis to venture to interrupt, and the lady—for Kalasrade, Isabel, or Helena, (ΕΛΕΝΗ,) was clearly one—the Helen of the lover's thought was never again mentioned between them.

His spirits, however, continued to amend, although his health was fluctuating; and having

at length fixed on the Procession in honour of Pan, from Keats's "Endymion," as the subject of a great work in basso-relievo, and having contrived, with Louis' assistance, to fit up a shed in the most retired part of the ruins, as a sort of out-of-door studio, he fell to work with the clay and the modelling tools with an ardour and intensity partaking, perhaps, equally of the strength of youth and the fever of disease, of hope and of despair.

These mixed feelings were in nothing more evinced than in the choice of his subject; for, eminently suited as the passage in question* undoubtedly was to his own classical taste and graceful execution, it is certain that he was attracted to the author, not merely by his unequal and fitful genius, his extraordinary pictorial and plastic power, but by a sympathy, an instinctive sympathy, with his destiny. Keats had died young, and with his talent unacknowledged,—and so he felt should he.

In the mean while he laboured strenuously at the Endymion, relinquishing his excursions on the water, and confining his walks to an even-

* Vide note 1, at the end of the paper.

ing ramble on Sunham Common, pleased to watch Bijou (who had transferred to our artist much of the allegiance which he had formerly paid to his old master, and even preferred him to Louis) frisking among the gorse, or gambolling along the shores of the deep irregular pools which, mingled with islets of cottages and cottage-gardens, form so picturesque a foreground to the rich landscapes beyond.

Better still did he love to seek the deep solitude of the double avenue of old oaks that skirted the upper part of the common; and there—

> "Like hermit near his cross of stone
> To pace at eve the silent turf alone,
> And softly breathe or inly muse a prayer."
>
> *Rhymed Plea for Tolerance.**

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* A poem of which (if it were not presumptuous in me to praise such a work) I should say, that it united the pregnant sense and the beautiful versification of Pope, the eloquent philosophy of Wordsworth, the wide humanity of Scott, and the fervent holiness of Cowper, with a spirit of charity all its own. That little volume is a just proof (if such were needed) how entirely intellect of the very highest class belongs to virtue. The work is out of print: must it continue so? Is it quite consistent in one imbued with so sincere a love for his fellow-creatures to withhold from them such an overflowing source of profit and delight?

More fitting place for such meditation he could hardly have found than that broad avenue of columned trunks, the boughs arching over his head, a natural temple! the shadows falling heavily as between the pillared aisles of some dim cathedral, and the sunbeams just glinting through the massive foliage, as if piercing the Gothic tracery of some pictured window. The wind came sweeping along the branches, with a sound at once solemn and soothing; and to a mind high-wrought and fancy-fraught as Henry's, the very song of the birds as they sought their nests in the high trees had something pure and holy as a vesper-hymn.

The sweetest hour in all the day to Henry Warner was that of his solitary walk in the avenue. Quite solitary it was always; for Louis had discovered that this was the only pleasure which his friend wished to enjoy unshared, and with instinctive delicacy contrived to keep away at that hour.

The only person who ever accosted Henry on these occasions was our good friend Stephen Lane, who used sometimes to meet him when

returning from his farm, and who, won, first by his countenance and then by his manner, and a little, perhaps, by the close but often unsuspected approximation which exists between the perfectly simple and the highly refined, had taken what he called a fancy to the lad, and even forgave him for prognosticating that Louis would some day or other be a painter of no common order,—that he had the feeling of beauty and the eye for colour, the inborn taste and the strong love of art which indicate genius. "So much the worse!" thought our friend Stephen; but such was the respect excited by the young artist's gentleness and sweetness, that, free-spoken as he generally was on all matters, the good butcher, on this solitary occasion, kept his thoughts to himself.

In strenuous application to the Procession, and lonely twilight walks, the summer and part of the autumn passed away. One bright October evening, Stephen, who had been absent for some weeks on a visit to a married daughter, met the young sculptor in his usual haunt, Sunham Avenue, and was struck with the altera-

tion in his appearance. Crabbe has described such an alteration with his usual graphic felicity.

"Then his thin cheek assumed a deadly hue,
And all the rose to one small spot withdrew:
They call'd it hectic; 'twas a fiery flush
More fix'd and deeper than the maiden blush;
His paler lips the pearly teeth disclosed,
And labouring lungs the lengthening speech opposed."
Parish Register.

But, perhaps, Hayley's account of his son still more resembles Henry Warner, because it adds the mind's strength to the body's extenuation. "Couldst thou see him now"—he is addressing Flaxman—

"Thou might'st suppose I had before thee brought
A Christian martyr by Ghiberti wrought,
So pain has crush'd his form with dire controul,
And so the seraph Patience arm'd his soul."
Letters on Sculpture.

He was leaning against a tree in the full light of the bright Hunter's moon, when Stephen accosted him with his usual rough kindness, and insisted on his accepting the support of his stout arm to help him home. Henry took it gratefully; in truth, he could hardly have walked that distance without such an aid; and for some time they walked on slowly and in

silence; the bright moonbeams chequering the avenue, sleeping on the moss-grown thatch of the cottage roofs, and playing with a silvery radiance on the clear ponds that starred the common. It was a beautiful scene, and Henry lingered to look upon it, when his companion, admonished by the fallen leaves, damp and dewy under foot, and the night wind sighing through the trees, begged him not to loiter, chiding him, as gently as Stephen could chide, for coming so far at such an hour.

"It was foolish," replied Henry; "but I love these trees, and I shall never see them again." And then he smiled, and began talking cheerfully of the bright moonbeams, and their fine effect upon the water; and Stephen drew the back of his hard huge hand across his eyes, and thought himself a great fool, and wondered how sweet smiles and hopeful happy words should make one sad; and when an acorn dropped from a tree at his feet, and the natural thought passed through his mind, "Poor youth, so he will fall!" Stephen had nothing for it but to hem away the choking sensation in his

throat, and begin to lecture the invalid in good earnest.

After landing him safely in his own parlour, and charging Louis to take care of his friend, Stephen drew his good hostess to the gate of her little garden:

"This poor lad must have the best advice, Mrs. Duval."

"Oh, Mr. Lane! he won't hear of it. The expense ——"

"Hang the expense, woman! he *shall* have advice," reiterated Stephen; "he must, and he shall."

"Oh, Mr. Lane! I have begged and entreated," rejoined Mrs. Duval, "and so has Louis. But the expense! For all he pays me so regularly, I am sure that he is poor —very poor. He lives upon next to nothing; and is so uneasy if I get him any little thing better than ordinary!—and Louis caught him the other day arranging his drawings and casts, and putting up his books, and writing letters about them to some gentleman in London, to pay for his funeral, he said, and save me trouble after he was

dead :—I thought Louis would have broken his heart. He reckoned upon selling that fine work in the shed here — the Procession — I forget what they call it, and it 's almost finished; but he 's too weak to work upon it now, and I know that it frets him, though he never utters a complaint. And then, if he dies, my poor boy will die too!"

"Could not one manage to make him take some money, somehow, as a loan, or a gift?" inquired Stephen, his hand involuntarily seeking his breeches-pocket, and pulling out a well-laden canvass-bag.

"No," replied Mrs. Duval, "that 's impossible. The poorer he gets, the prouder he grows. You could no more get him to take money than to send for a doctor."

"Dang it! he shall, though!" returned honest Stephen. "We 'll see about that in the morning. In the mean while, do you go home with me, and see if you and my mistress can't find something that the poor lad will like. She has been making some knick-knacks to-day, I know, for little Peggy our grand-daughter, who has been ill, and whom we

have brought home for change of air. Doubtless there 'll be some to spare,—and if there is not, he wants it worst."

And in an half-an-hour Mrs. Duval returned to the Friary Cottage, laden with old wine and niceties of all sorts from the well-furnished store closet, and a large basin of jelly of dear Mrs. Lane's own making. Ill as he was, and capricious as is a sick man's appetite, our invalid, who, like everybody that had ever seen her, loved Margaret Lane, could not reject the viands which came so recommended.

The next morning saw Stephen an unexpected visiter in the young sculptor's studio, fixed in wondering admiration before the great work. "A procession in honour of Pan!" repeated the good butcher. "Well, I'm no great judge, to be sure, but I like it, young man; and I'll tell you why I like it, because it 's full of spirit and life, like; the folk are all *moving*. Dang it! look at that horse's head! how he 's tossing it back! And that girl's petticoat, how light and dancy it seems! And that lamb, poking its little head out of the basket,—ay that 's right, bleat away! One

would think you had been as much amongst them as I have."

Henry was charmed at Stephen's criticism, and frankly told him so.

"Well, then!" continued Mr. Lane, "since you think me such a good judge of your handiwork, you must let me buy it.* Tell me your price," added he, pulling out an enormous brown leather book, well stuffed with bank-notes; "I 'm the man for a quick bargain."

"Buy the relievo! But, my dear Mr. Lane, what will you do with it?" replied the artist. "Handsome as your new house at Sunham is, this requires space and distance, and——"

"I 'm not going to put it in any house of mine, I promise you, my lad," replied Mr. Lane, half affronted. "I hope I know better what is fitting for a plain tradesman; and if I don't, my Margaret does. But I 'll tell you what I mean to do with it," continued he, recovering his good humour,—"it was my wife's thought. I shall make a present of it to the Corporation, to put up in the Town-hall. I 've been a rare

* Vide note 2, at the end of the paper.

plague to them all my life, and it is but handsome, now that I am going away as far as Sunham, to make up with them; so I shall send them this as a parting gift. Dang it! how well it 'll look in the old hall!" shouted he, drowning with his loud exclamations poor Henry's earnest thanks, and unfeigned reluctance—for Henry felt the real motive of a purchase so much out of the good butcher's way, and tried to combat his resolution. "I will have it, I tell you! But I make one condition, that you 'll see a doctor this very day, and that you are not to touch the Procession again till he gives you leave. I certainly shan't send it them till the spring. And now tell me the price, for have it I will!"

And the price was settled, though with considerable difficulty, of an unusual kind; the estimate of the patron being much higher than that of the artist. The purchase was completed—but the work was never finished: for before the last acorn fell, Stephen's forebodings were accomplished, and the young Sculptor and his many sorrows, his hopes, his fears, his high aspirations, and his unhappy

love, were laid at rest in the peaceful grave. The only work of his now remaining at Belford is a monument to the memory of the poor Abbé, executed from one of Louis' most simple designs.

Note 1.—The poetry of John Keats is, like all poetry of a very high style and very unequal execution, so much more talked of than really known, that I am tempted to add the Hymn to Pan, as well as the Procession, which is necessary to the comprehension of my little story. Perhaps it is the finest and most characteristic specimen that could be found of his wonderful pictorial power.

PROCESSION AND HYMN IN HONOUR OF PAN.

Leading the way, young damsels danced along,
Bearing the burden of a shepherd-song;
Each having a white wicker overbrimm'd
With April's tender younglings: next, well trimm'd,
A crowd of shepherds with as sunburnt looks
As may be read of in Arcadian books;
Such as sate listening round Apollo's pipe,
When the great deity, for earth too ripe,
Let his divinity o'erflowing die
In music through the vales of Thessaly:

Some idly trail'd their sheep-hooks on the ground,
And some kept up a shrilly mellow sound
With ebon-tipped flutes: close after these,
Now coming from beneath the forest trees,
A venerable priest full soberly
Begirt, with ministering looks: always his eye
Steadfast upon the matted turf he kept,
And after him his sacred vestments swept.
From his right hand there swung a vase, milk white,
Of mingled wine out-sparkling generous light;
And in his left he held a basket full
Of all sweet herbs that searching eye could cull;
Wild thyme, and valley-lilies whiter still
Than Leda's love, and cresses from the rill.
His aged head, crowned with beechen wreath,
Seem'd like a poll of ivy, in the teeth
Of Winter hoar. Then came another crowd
Of shepherds, lifting in due time aloud
Their share of the ditty. After them appear'd,
Up-follow'd by a multitude that rear'd
Their voices to the clouds, a fair-wrought car,
Easily rolling, so as scarce to mar
The freedom of three steeds of dapple brown.
Who stood therein did seem of great renown
Among the throng; his youth was fully-blown,
Showing like Ganymede to manhood grown;
And, for those simple times, his garments were
A chieftain-king's: beneath his breast, half bare,
Was hung a silver bugle, and between
His nervy knees there lay a boar-spear keen.
A smile was on his countenance; he seem'd
To common lookers-on like one who dream'd
Of idleness in groves Elysian:

But there were some who feelingly could scan
A lurking trouble in his nether-lip,
And see that oftentimes the reins would slip
Through his forgotten hands: then would they sigh,
And think of yellow leaves, of owlet's cry,
Of logs piled solemnly.—Ah, well-a-day!
Why should our young Endymion pine away?

Soon the assembly, in a circle ranged,
Stood silent round the shrine: each look was changed
To sudden veneration: women meek
Beckon'd their sons to silence; while each cheek
Of virgin-bloom paled gently for slight fear;
Endymion too, without a forest peer,
Stood wan and pale, and with an unawed face,
Among his brothers of the mountain-chase.
In midst of all, the venerable priest
Eyed them with joy from greatest to the least,
And, after lifting up his aged hands,
Thus spake he:—"Men of Latmos! shepherd bands!
Whose care it is to guard a thousand flocks:
Whether descended from beneath the rocks
That overtop your mountains; whether come
From valleys where the pipe is never dumb;
Or from your swelling downs, where sweet air stirs
Blue harebells lightly, and where prickly furze
Buds lavish gold; or ye, whose precious charge
Nibble their fill at Ocean's very marge,
Whose mellow reeds are touch'd with sounds forlorn,
By the dim echoes of old Triton's horn:
Mothers and wives! who day by day prepare
The scrip with needments for the mountain air;
And all ye gentle girls, who foster up
Udderless lambs, and in a little cup

Will put choice honey for a favour'd youth:
Yea, every one attend! for in good truth
Our vows are wanting to our great god Pan.
Are not our lowing heifers sleeker than
Night-swollen mushrooms? Are not our wide plains
Speckled with countless fleeces? Have not rains
Green'd over April's lap? No howling sad
Sickens our fearful ewes; and we have had
Great bounty from Endymion our lord.
The earth is glad: the merry lark has pour'd
His early song against . on breezy sky,
That spreads so clear o'er our solemnity."

Thus ending, on the shrine he heap'd a spire
Of teeming sweets, enkindling sacred fire;
Anon he stain'd the thick and spongy sod
With wine in honour of the Shepherd-god.
Now while the earth was drinking it, and while
Bay-leaves were crackling in the fragrant pile,
And gummy frankincense was sparkling bright
'Neath smothering parsley, and a hazy light
Spread grayly eastward, thus a chorus sang:

"O thou! whose mighty palace-roof doth hang
From jagged trunks, and overshadoweth
Eternal whispers, glooms, the birth, life, death
Of unseen flowers in heavy peacefulness;
Who lovest to see the hamadryads dress
Their ruffled locks where meeting hazels darken,
And through whole solemn hours dost sit and hearken
The dreary melody of bedded reeds,
In desolate places, where dank moisture breeds
The pipy hemlock to strange overgrowth;
Bethinking thee how melancholy loath

Thou wert to lose fair Syrinx—do thou now,
By thy love's milky brow,
By all the trembling mazes that she ran,
Hear us, great Pan!

"O thou, for whose soul-soothing quiet turtles
Passion their voices cooingly among myrtles,
What time thou wanderest at eventide
Through sunny meadows that outskirt the side
Of thine enmossed realms: O thou, to whom
Broad-leaved fig-trees even now foredoom
Their ripen'd fruitage; yellow-girted bees
Their golden honeycombs; our village leas
Their fairest-blossom'd beans and poppied corn;
The chuckling linnet its five young unborn,
To sing for thee; low-creeping strawberries
Their summer coolness; pent-up butterflies
Their freckled wings; yea, the fresh-budding year
All its completions—be quickly near,
By every wind that nods the mountain pine,
O Forester divine!

"Thou to whom every faun and satyr flies
For willing service; whether to surprise
The squatted hare, while in half-sleeping fit;
Or upward ragged precipices flit
To save poor lambkins from the eagle's maw;
Or by mysterious enticement draw
Bewilder'd Shepherds to their path again;
Or to tread breathless round the frothy main,
And gather up all fancifullest shells
For thee to tumble into Naiads' cells,
And, being hidden, laugh at their out-peeping;
Or to delight thee with fantastic leaping,
The while they pelt each other on the crown

With silvery oak-apples and fir-cones brown;—
By all the echoes that about thee ring,
Hear us, O Satyr-King!

"O hearkener to the loud-clapping shears,
While ever and anon to his shorn peers
A lamb goes bleating: winder of the horn,
When snorting wild-boars routing tender corn
Anger our huntsmen; breather round our farms
To keep off mildews and all weather harms:
Strange ministrant of undescribed sounds
That come a-swooning over hollow grounds,
And wither drearily on barren moors:
Dread opener of the mysterious doors
Leading to universal knowledge—see,
Great son of Dryope!
The many that are come to pay their vows
With leaves about their brows!—
Be still the unimaginable lodge
For solitary thinkings; such as dodge
Conception to the very bourne of Heaven,
Then leave the naked brain; be still the leaven
That spreading in this dull and clodded earth
Gives it a touch ethereal—a new birth:
Be still a symbol of immensity;
A firmament reflected in a sea;
An element filling the space between;
An unknown—but no more: we humbly screen
With uplift hands our foreheads lowly bending,
And giving out a shout most heaven-rending,
Conjure thee to receive our humble pæan
Upon thy mount Lycean!"

Everwhile they brought the burden to a close
A shout from the whole multitude arose

That linger'd in the air like dying rolls
Of abrupt thunder, when Ionian shoals
Of dolphins bob their noses through the brine.
Meantime on shady levels, mossy fine,
Young companies nimbly began dancing
To the swift treble pipe and humming string:
Ay, those fair living forms swam heavenly
To tunes forgotten, out of memory;
Fair creatures, whose young children's children bred
Thermopylæ its heroes, not yet dead,
But in old marbles ever beautiful.

KEATS'S *Endymion.*

Note 2.—Let not Stephen Lane's conduct be called unnatural! I do verily believe that there is no instance that can be invented of generosity and delicacy that might not find a parallel amongst the middle classes of England, the affluent tradesmen of the metropolis and the great towns, who often act as if they held their riches on the tenure of benevolence.

With regard to Stephen Lane's purchase, I happen to be furnished with a most excellent precedent—a case completely in point, and of very recent occurrence. It was told to me, and most charmingly told, by one whom I am proud to be permitted to call my friend, the Lady Madalina Palmer, who related the

story with the delightful warmth with which generous people speak of generosity;—and I have now before me a letter from one of the parties concerned, which states the matter better still. But that letter I must not transcribe, and Lady Madalina is too far off to dictate to me in the pretty Scotch, which, from her, one likes better than English; so that I am fain to record the naked facts as simply and briefly as possible, leaving them to produce their own effect on those who love the arts, and who admire a warm-hearted liberality in every rank of life.

Some time in November 1831, Mr. Cribb, an ornamental gilder in London, a superb artist in *his* line, and employed in the most delicate and finest work by the Duke of Devonshire and other men of taste amongst the high nobility, was struck with a small picture—a cattle piece—in a shop window in Greek Street. On inquiring for the artist, he could hear no tidings of him; but the people of the shop promised to find him out. Time after time our persevering lover of the Arts called to repeat his inquiries, but always

unsuccessfully, until about three months after, when he found that the person he sought was a Mr. Thomas Sydney Cooper, an English artist, who had been for many years settled at Brussels as a drawing-master, but had been driven from that city by the revolution, which had deprived him of his pupils, amongst whom were some members of the Royal Family, and, unable to obtain employment in London as a cattle painter, had, with the generous self-devotion which most ennobles a man of genius, supported his family by making lithographic drawings of fashionable caps and bonnets,—I suppose as a puff for some milliner, or some periodical which deals in costumes. In the midst of this interesting family, and of these caps and bonnets, Mr. Cribb found him; and deriving from what he saw of his sketches and drawings additional conviction of his genius, immediately commissioned him to paint him a picture on his own subject and at his own price, making such an advance as the richest artist would not scruple to accept on a commission, conjuring him to leave off caps and bonnets, and foretelling his future eminence. Mr. Cribb

says that he shall never forget the delight of Mr. Cooper's face when he gave the order—he has a right to the luxury of such a recollection. Well! the picture was completed, and when completed, our friend Mr. Cribb, who is not a man to do *his* work by halves, bespoke a companion, and, while that was painting, showed the first to a great number of artists and gentlemen, who all agreed in expressing the strongest admiration, and in wondering where the painter could have been hidden. Before the second picture was half finished, a Mr. Carpenter (I believe that I am right in the name) gave Mr. Cooper a commission for a piece, which was exhibited in May 1833 at the Suffolk Street Gallery; and from that moment orders poured in, and the artist's fortune is made.

It is right to add, that Mr. Cooper was generously eager to have this story made known, and Mr. Cribb as generously averse from its publication. But surely it ought to be recorded, for the example's sake, and for their mutual honour. I ought also to say, that it is only in heart, and pocket, and station

that Mr. Cribb resembles my butcher; the former being evidently a man of fair education and excellent taste. Oh! that I could have printed his account of this matter! It was so natural, so *naïf*, so characteristic, so amusing. I dared not commit such a trespass on the sacredness of private communication; but I shall keep it to my dying day, and leave it to my heirs; so that if hereafter, some sixty years hence, a future Allan Cunningham (if there can ever be another biographer like him) shall delight the world with another series of Lives of the Painters, the history of the English Paul Potter may be adorned and illustrated by the warm-hearted and graphic narrative of his earliest patron.

BELLES OF THE BALL-ROOM, No. II.

MATCH-MAKING.

THE proudest of all our proud country gentlewomen,—she who would most thoroughly have disdained the unlucky town ladies, who are destined to look on brick walls instead of green trees, and to tread on stone pavements instead of gravel walks,—was beyond all doubt my good friend Mrs. Leslie.

Many years ago, a family of that name came to reside in our neighbourhood; and being persons thoroughly *comme il faut*, who had taken, on a long lease, the commodious and creditable mansion called Hallenden Hall, with its large park-like paddock, its gardens, greenhouses, conservatories, and so forth,—and who evidently intended to live in a style suited to their habitation,—were immediately visited by the inmates of all the courts, manors, parks, places, lodges, and castles within reach.

Mr. Leslie was, as was soon discovered, a man of ancient family and good estate, who had left his own county on the loss of a contested election, or some such cause of disgust, and had passed the last few years in London for the education of his daughters. He was, too, that exceedingly acceptable and somewhat rare thing, a lively, talking, agreeable man, very clever and a little quaint, and making his conversation tell as much by a certain off-handedness of phrase and manner, as by the shrewdness of his observations, and his extensive knowledge of the world. He had also, besides his pleasantry and good humour, another prime requisite for country popularity: although greatly above the general run of his neighbours in intellect, he much resembled them in his tastes;—loved shooting, fishing, and hunting in the morning; liked good dinners, good wine, and a snug rubber at night; farmed with rather less loss of money than usually befalls a gentleman; was a staunch partisan at vestries and turnpike meetings; a keen politician at the reading-room and the club; frequented races and coursing meetings; had a fancy for

the more business-like gaieties of quarter sessions and grand juries; accepted a lieutenancy in the troop of yeomanry cavalry, and actually served as churchwarden during the second year of his residence in the parish. At a word, he was an active, stirring, bustling personage, whose life of mind and thorough unaffectedness made him universally acceptable to rich and poor. At first sight there was a homeliness about him, a carelessness of appearance and absence of pretension, which rather troubled his more aristocratic compeers; but the gentleman was so evident in all that he said or did, in tone and accent, act and word, that his little peculiarities were speedily forgotten, or only remembered to make him still more cordially liked.

If Mr. Leslie erred on the side of unpretendingness, his wife took good care not to follow his example: she had pretensions enough of all sorts to have set up twenty fine ladies out of her mere superfluity. The niece of an Irish baron and the sister of a Scotch countess, she fairly wearied all her acquaintance with the titles of her relatives. "My uncle, Lord Lin-

ton—my brother-in-law, the Earl of Paisley," and all the Lady Lucys, Lady Elizabeths, Lady Janes, and Lady Marys of the one noble house and the honourable masters and misses of the other, were twanged in the ears of her husband, children, servants, and visiters, every day and all day long. She could not say that the weather was fine without quoting my lord, or order dinner without referring to my lady. This peculiarity was the pleasure, the amusement of her life. Its business was to display, and if possible to marry her daughters; and I think she cherished her grand connexions the more, as being, in some sort, implements or accessories in her designs upon rich bachelors, than for any other cause; since, greatly as she idolized rank in her own family, she had seen too much of its disadvantages when allied with poverty, not to give a strong preference to wealth in the grand pursuit of husband-hunting. She would, to be sure, have had no objection to an affluent peer for a son-in-law, had such a thing offered; but as the commodity, not too common anywhere, was particularly scarce in our county, she wisely addressed herself to the higher order of country

squires, men of acres who inherited large territories and fine places, or men of money who came by purchase into similar possessions, together with their immediate heirs, leaving the younger brothers of the nobility, in common with all other younger brothers, unsought and uncared-for.

Except in the grand matters of pedigrees and match-making, my good friend Mrs. Leslie was a sufficiently common person; rather vulgar and dowdy in the morning, when, like many country gentlewomen of her age and class, she made amends for unnecessary finery by more unnecessary shabbiness, and trotted about the place in an old brown stuff gown, much resembling the garment called a Joseph worn by our great-grandmothers, surmounted by a weather-beaten straw-bonnet and a sun-burnt bay wig; and particularly stately in an evening, when silks and satins made after the newest fashion, caps radiant with flowers, hats waving with feathers, chandelier ear-rings, and an ermine-lined cloak, the costly gift of a diplomatic relation—("My cousin, the envoy," rivalled in her talk even "my sister the coun-

tess")—converted her at a stroke into a chaperon of the very first water.

Her daughters, Barbara and Caroline, were pretty girls enough, and would probably have been far prettier, had Nature, in their case, only been allowed fair play. As it was, they had been laced and braced, and drilled and starved, and kept from the touch of sun, or air, or fire, until they had become too slender, too upright, too delicate, both in figure and complexion. To my eye they always looked as if they had been originally intended to have been plumper and taller, with more colour in their cheeks, more spring and vigour in their motions, more of health and life about them, poor things! Nevertheless, they were prettyish girls, with fine hair, fine eyes, fine teeth, and an expression of native good humour, which, by great luck, their preposterous education had not been able to eradicate.

Certainly, if an injudicious education could have spoilt young persons naturally well-tempered and well-disposed, these poor girls would have sunk under its evil influence. From seven years old to seventeen, they had been trained

for display and for conquest, and could have played without ear, sung without voice, and drawn without eye, against any misses of their inches in the county. Never were accomplishments more thoroughly travestied. Barbara, besides the usual young-lady iniquities of the organ, the piano, the harp, and the guitar, distended her little cheeks like a trumpeter, by blowing the fluté and the flageolet; whilst her sister, who had not breath for the wind instruments, encroached in a different way on the musical prerogative of man, by playing most outrageously on the fiddle—a female Paganini!

They painted in all sorts of styles, from "the human face divine," in oils, crayons, and miniatures, down to birds and butterflies, so that the whole house was a series of exhibition-rooms; the walls were hung with their figures and landscapes, the tables covered with their sketches; you sat upon their performances in the shape of chair cushions, and trod on them in the form of ottomans. A family likeness reigned throughout these productions. Various in style, but alike in badness, all were

distinguished by the same uniform unsuccess. Nor did they confine their attempts to the fine arts. There was no end to their misdoings. They japanned boxes, embroidered work-bags, gilded picture-frames, constructed pincushions, bound books, and made shoes. For universality the admirable Crichton was a joke to them. There was nothing in which they had not failed.

During one winter (and winter is the season of a country belle) Mrs. Leslie traded upon her daughters' accomplishments. Every morning visit was an exhibition, every dinner-party a concert, and the unlucky assistants looked, listened, yawned, and lied, and got away as soon as possible, according to the most approved fashion in such cases. Half-a-year's experience, however, convinced the prudent mamma that acquirements alone would not suffice for her purpose; and having obtained for the Miss Leslies the desirable reputation of being the most accomplished young ladies in the neighbourhood, she relinquished the proud but unprofitable pleasure of exhibition, and wisely addressed herself to the more hopeful task of humouring the fancies and flattering the vanity of others.

In this pursuit she displayed a degree of zeal, perseverance, and resource, worthy of better cause. Not a bachelor of fortune within twenty miles, but Mrs. Leslie took care to be informed of his tastes and habits, and to offer one or other of her fair nymphs to his notice, after the manner most likely to attract his attention and fall in with his ways. Thus, for a whole season, Bab (in spite of the danger to her complexion) hunted with the Copley hounds, riding and fencing* to admiration—not in chase of the fox, poor girl, for which she cared as little as any she in Christendom—but to catch, if it might be, that eminent and wealthy Nimrod, Sir Thomas Copley,—who, after all, governed by that law of contrast which so often presides over the connubial destiny, married a town beauty, who never mounted a horse in her life, and would have fainted at the notion of leaping a five-barred gate; whilst Caroline, with equal disregard to her looks, was set to

* By "fencing," I do not mean here practising "the noble science of defence," but something, sooth to say, almost as manly. I use the word in its fox-hunting sense, and intend by it that Miss Barbara took flying leaps over hedges and ditches, and five-barred gates.

feed poultry, milk cows, make butter, and walk over ploughed fields with Squire Thornley, an agriculturist of the old school, who declared that his wife should understand the conduct of a farm as well as of a house; and followed up his maxim by marrying his dairy-maid. They studied mathematics to please a Cambridge scholar, and made verses to attract a literary lord; taught Sunday schools and attended missionary meetings to strike the serious; and frequented balls, concerts, archery clubs, and water-parties to charm the gay; were everything to everybody, seen everywhere, known to every one; and yet at the end of three years were, in spite of jaunts to Brighton, Cheltenham, and London, a trip to Paris, and a tour through Switzerland, just as likely to remain the two accomplished Miss Leslies as ever they had been. To "wither on the virgin stalk," seemed their destiny.

How this happened is difficult to tell. The provoked mother laid the fault partly on the inertness of her husband, who, to say truth, had watched her manœuvres with some amusement, but without using the slightest means to

assist her schemes; and partly on the refractoriness of her son and heir, a young gentleman who, although sent first to Eton, most aristocratic of public schools, and then to Christ Church, most lordly of colleges, with the especial maternal injunction to form good connexions, so that he might pick up an heiress for himself and men of fortune for his sisters, had, with unexampled perversity, cultivated the friendship of the clever, the entertaining, and the poor, and was now on the point of leaving Oxford without having made a single acquaintance worth knowing. "This, this was the unkindest cut of all;" for Richard, a lad of good person and lively parts, had always been in her secret soul his mother's favourite; and now, to find him turn round on her, and join his father in laying the blame of her several defeats on her own bad generalship and want of art to conceal her designs, was really too vexatious, especially as Barbara and Caroline, who had hitherto been patterns of filial obedience, entering blindly into all her objects and doing their best to bring them to bear, now began to show symptoms of being ashamed of the unmaidenly for-

wardness into which they had been betrayed, and even to form a resolution (especially Barbara, who had more of her father's and brother's sense than the good-natured but simple Caroline) not to join in such manœuvring again. "It cannot be right in me, mamma," said she one day, "to practise pistol-shooting* with Mr. Greville, when no other lady does so; and therefore, if you please, I shall not go—I am sure you cannot wish me to do anything not right."

"Particularly as there's no use in it," added Richard: "fire as often as you may, you 'll never hit that mark."

And Mr. Greville and the pistol-shooting were given up; and Mrs. Leslie felt her authority shaken.

Affairs were in this posture, when the arrival of a visiter after her own heart—young, rich, unmarried, and a baronet—renewed the hopes of our match-maker.

For some months they had had at Hallenden

* That ladies should practise pistol-shooting, is not so incredible as it seems. A very beautiful bride of the highest rank is said to have beguiled the ennui of the honeymoon by pursuing this recreation, in company with her most noble and most simple spouse.

Hall a very unpretending, but in my mind a very amiable inmate, Mary Morland, the only daughter of Mr. Leslie's only sister, who, her parents being dead, and herself and her brother left in indigent circumstances, had accepted her uncle's invitation to reside in his family as long as it suited her convenience, and was now on the point of departing to keep her brother's house, — a young clergyman recently ordained, who intended to eke out the scanty income of his curacy by taking pupils, for which arduous office he was eminently qualified by his excellent private character and high scholastic attainments.

Mary Morland was that very delightful thing, an unaffected intelligent young woman, well-read, well-informed, lively and conversable. She had a good deal of her uncle's acuteness and talent, and a vein of pleasantry, which differed from his only as much as pleasantry feminine ought to differ from pleasantry masculine: he was humorous, and she was arch. I do not know that I ever heard anything more agreeable than her flow of sprightly talk, always light and sparkling, spirited and easy, often

rich in literary allusion, *but never degenerating* into pretension or pedantry. She was entirely devoid of the usual young-lady accomplishments; (an unspeakable relief in that house!) neither played, nor sung, nor drew, nor danced; made no demand on praise, no claim on admiration, and was as totally free from display as from affectation in the exercise of her great conversational power. Such a person is sure to be missed, go where she may; and every one capable of appreciating her many engaging qualities felt, with Mr. Leslie, that her loss would be irreparable at Hallenden.

The evil day however arrived, as such days are wont to arrive, all too soon. William Morland was actually come to carry his sister to their distant home; for they were of the "North countrie," and his curacy was situate in far Northumberland. He was accompanied by an old schoolfellow and intimate friend, in whose carriage Mary and himself were to perform their long journey; and it was on this kind companion, rich and young, a baronet and a bachelor, that Mrs. Leslie at once set her heart for a son-in-law.

Her manœuvres began the very evening of his arrival. She had been kind to Miss Morland from the moment she ascertained that she was a plain though lady-like woman of six-and-twenty, wholly unaccomplished in her sense of the word, and altogether the most unlikely person in the world to rival her two belles. She had been always kind to "poor dear Mary," as she called her; but as soon as she beheld Sir Arthur Selby, she became the very fondest of aunts, insisted that Barbara should furnish her wardrobe and Caroline paint her portrait, and that the whole party should stay until these operations were satisfactorily concluded.

Sir Arthur, who seemed to entertain a great regard and affection for his two friends,—who, the only children of the clergyman of the parish, had been his old companions and playmates at the manor-house, and from whom he had been parted during a long tour in Greece, Italy, and Spain,—consented with a very good grace to this arrangement; the more so as, himself a lively and clever man, he perceived, apparently with great amusement, the designs of his hostess, and for the first two or three

days humoured them with much drollery; affecting to be an epicure, that she might pass off her cook's excellent confectionery for Miss Caroline's handiwork; and even pretending to have sprained his ankle, that he might divert himself by observing in how many ways the same fair lady — who, something younger, rather prettier, and far more docile than her sister, had been selected by Mrs. Leslie for his intended bride — would be pressed by that accomplished match-maker into his service; handing him his coffee, for instance, fetching him books and newspapers, offering him her arm when he rose from the sofa, following him about with footstools, cushions, and ottomans, and waiting on him just like a valet or a page in female attire.

At the end of that period,—from some unexplained change of feeling, whether respect for his friend William Morland, or weariness of acting a part so unsuited to him, or some relenting in favour of the young lady, — he threw off at once his lameness and his affectation, and resumed his own singularly natural and delightful manner. I saw a great deal of

him, for my father's family and the Selbys had intermarried once or twice in every century since the Conquest; and though it might have puzzled a genealogist to decide how near or how distant was the relationship, yet, as amongst North-country folk "blood is warmer than water," we continued not only to call cousins, but to entertain much of the kindly feeling by which family connexion often is, and always should be, accompanied. My father and Mr. Leslie had always been intimate, and Mary Morland and myself having taken a strong liking to each other, we met at one house or the other almost every day; and, accustomed as I was to watch the progress of Mrs. Leslie's manœuvres, the rise, decline, and fall of her several schemes, I soon perceived that her hopes and plans were in full activity on the present occasion.

It was, indeed, perfectly evident that she expected to hail Caroline as Lady Selby before many months were past; and she had more reason for the belief than had often happened to her, inasmuch as Sir Arthur not only yielded with the best possible grace to her repeated

entreaties for the postponement of his journey, but actually paid the young lady considerable attention, watching the progress of her portrait of Miss Morland, and aiding her not only by advice but assistance, to the unspeakable benefit of the painting, and even carrying his complaisance so far as to ask her to sing every evening, —he being the very first person who had ever voluntarily caused the issue of those notes, which more resembled the screaming of a macaw than the tones of a human being. To be sure, he did not listen,—that would have been too much to expect from mortal; but he not only regularly requested her to sing, but took care, by suggesting single songs, to prevent her sister from singing with her,—who, thus left to her own devices, used to sit in a corner listening to William Morland with a sincerity and earnestness of attention very different from the make-believe admiration which she had been used to show by her mamma's orders to the clever men of fortune whom she had been put forward to attract. That Mrs. Leslie did not see what was going forward in that quarter, was marvellous; but her whole soul was en-

grossed by the desire to clutch Sir Arthur, and so long as he called on Caroline for bravura after bravura, for scena after scena, she was happy.

Mr. Leslie, usually wholly inattentive to such proceedings, was on this occasion more clear-sighted. He asked Mary Morland one day "whether she knew what her brother and Sir Arthur were about?" and, on her blushing and hesitating in a manner very unusual with her, added, chucking her under the chin, "A word to the wise is enough, my queen: I am not quite a fool, whatever your aunt may be, and so you may tell the young gentlemen." And with that speech he walked off.

The next morning brought a still fuller declaration of his sentiments. Sir Arthur had received, by post, a letter which had evidently affected him greatly, and had handed it to William Morland, who had read it with equal emotion; but neither of them had mentioned its contents, or alluded to it in any manner. After breakfast, the young men walked off together, and the girls separated to their different employments. I, who had arrived there to spend the day, was about to join them, when I was

stopped by Mr. Leslie. "I want to speak to you," said he, "about that cousin of yours. My wife thinks he 's going to marry Caroline; whereas it 's plain to me, as doubtless it must be to you, that whatever attention he may be paying to that simple child—and, for my own part, I don't see that he *is* paying her any—is merely to cover William Morland's attachment to Bab. So that the end of Mrs. Leslie's wise schemes will be, to have one daughter the wife of a country curate——"

"A country curate, Mr. Leslie!" ejaculated Mrs. Leslie, holding up her hands in amazement and horror.

"And the other," pursued Mr. Leslie, "an old maid."

"An old maid!" reiterated Mrs. Leslie, in additional dismay—"An old maid!" Her very wig stood on end; and what further she would have said was interrupted by the entrance of the accused party.

"I am come, Mr. Leslie," said Sir Arthur, —"do not move, Mrs. Leslie—pray stay, my dear cousin,—I am come to present to you a double petition. The letter which I received

this morning was, like most human events, of mingled yarn—it brought intelligence of good and of evil. I have lost an old and excellent friend, the rector of Hadley-cum-Appleton, and have, by that loss, an excellent living to present to my friend William Morland. It is above fifteen hundred a-year, with a large house, a fine garden, and a park-like glebe, altogether a residence fit for any lady; and it comes at a moment in which such a piece of preferment is doubly welcome, since the first part of my petition relates to him. Hear it favourably, my dear sir—my dear madam: he loves your Barbara—and Barbara, I hope and believe, loves him."

"There, Mrs. Leslie!" interrupted Mr. Leslie, with an arch nod. "There! do you hear that?"

"You are both favourably disposed, I am sure," resumed Sir Arthur. "Such a son-in-law must be an honour to any man—must he not, my dear madam?—and I, for my part, have a brother's interest in his suit."

"There, Mr. Leslie!" ejaculated in her turn Mrs. Leslie, returning her husband's nod most

triumphantly. "A brother's interest!—do you hear that?"

"Since," pursued Sir Arthur, "I have to crave your intercession with his dear and admirable sister, whom I have loved, without knowing it, ever since we were children in the nursery, and who now, although confessing that she does not hate me, talks of want of fortune—as if I had not enough, and of want of beauty and want of accomplishments—as if her matchless elegance and unrivalled conversation were not worth all the doll-like prettiness or tinsel acquirements under the sun. Pray intercede for me, dear cousin!—dear sir!" continued the ardent lover; whilst Mr. Leslie, without taking the slightest notice of the appeal, nodded most provokingly to the crest-fallen match-maker, and begged to know how she liked Sir Arthur's opinion of her system of education?

What answer the lady made, this deponent saith not—indeed, I believe she was too angry to speak—but the result was all that could be desired by the young people: the journey was again postponed; the double marriage celc-

brated at Hallenden; and Miss Caroline, as bridesmaid, accompanied the fair brides to "canny Northumberland," to take her chance for a husband amongst "fresh fields and pastures new."

MRS. TOMKINS, THE CHEESEMONGER.

PERHAPS the finest character in all Molière is that of Madame Pernelle, the scolding grandmother in the "Tartufe;" at least, that scene (the opening scene of that glorious play), in which, tottering in at a pace which her descendants have difficulty in keeping up with, she puts to flight her grandson, and her daughter-in-law's brother, (think of making men fly the field!) and puts to silence her daughter-in-law, her grand-daughter, and even the pert soubrette, (think of making women hold their tongues!) and finally boxes her own waiting-maid's ears for yawning and looking tired,—that scene of matchless scolding has always seemed to me unrivalled in the comic drama.* The

* I cannot resist the temptation of subjoining, at the end of this paper, some part of that inimitable scene; believing that, like other great writers of an older date, Molière has been somewhat "pushed from his stool" by later drama-

English version of it in "The Hypocrite" is far less amusing, the old Lady Lambert being represented in that piece rather as a sour devotee, whose fiery zeal, and her submission to Cantwell, and even to Mawworm, form the chief cause, the mainspring—as it were, of her lectures; whilst Madame Pernelle, although doubtless the effect of her harangues is heightened and deepened by her perfect conviction that she is right and that all the rest are wrong, has yet a natural gift of shrewishness—is, so to say, a scold born, and would have rated her daughter-in-law and all her descendants, and bestowed her cuffs upon her domestics with equal good-will, though she had never aspired to the reputation of piety, or edified by the example of M. Tartufe. The gift was in her. Not only has Molière beaten, as was to be expected, his own English imitator, but he has achieved the far higher honour of vanquishing, in this single instance, his two great forerunners, Masters Shakspeare and

tists, and is more talked of than read. At all events, any one who does remember Madame Pernelle will not be sorry to meet with her again.—*Vide note at the end of this paper.*

Fletcher. For, although the royal dame of Anjou had a considerable talent for vituperation, and Petruchio's two wives, Katherine and Maria,* were scolds of promise; none of the three, in my mind, could be said to approach Madame Pernelle,—not to mention the superior mode of giving tongue (if I may affront the beautiful race of spaniels by applying in such a way a phrase appropriated to their fine instinct),—to say nothing of the verbal superiority, Flipote's box on the ear remains unrivalled and unapproached. Katherine breaking the lute over her master's head is a joke in comparison.

Now, notwithstanding the great Frenchman's beating his English rivals so much in the representation of a shrew, I am by no means

* Shakspeare's fine extravaganza, "The Taming of the Shrew," gave rise to an equally pleasant continuation by Fletcher, entitled "The Woman's Prize; or, The Tamer Tamed;" a play little known, except to the professed lovers of the old drama, in which Petruchio, having lost his good wife Katherine, is betrayed into a second marriage to a gentle, quiet, demure damsel, called Maria, who, after their nuptials, changes into an absolute fury, turns the tables upon him completely, and succeeds in establishing the female dominion upon the firmest possible basis, being aided throughout by a sort of chorus of married women from town and country.

disposed to concede to our Continental neighbours any supremacy in the real living model. I should be as sorry that French women should go beyond us in that particular gift of the tongue, which is a woman's sole weapon, her one peculiar talent, as that their soldiers should beat ours in the more manly way of fighting with sword and with gun, or their painters or poets overpass us in their respective arts. The art of scolding is no trifling accomplishment, and I claim for my countrywomen a high degree of excellence in all the shades and varieties thereunto belonging, from the peevish grumble to the fiery retort—from "the quip modest" to "the countercheck quarrelsome." The gift is strictly national too; for although one particular district of London (which, indeed, has given its name to the dialect*) has been cele-

* Even the Americans—although, in a land so celebrated for freedom of speech, and so jealous of being outdone in any way by the mother country, one would think that they might by this time have acquired an established scolding-place of their own—still use the word "Billingsgate" to express the species of vituperation of which I am treating. I found the phrase in that sense in a very eloquent speech of their very eloquent advocate Mr. Mason, as reported in a New York paper, no longer ago than last June; a dif-

brated, and I believe deservedly celebrated, for its breed of scolds; yet I will undertake to pick up in any part of England, at four-and-twenty hours' notice, a shrew that shall vie with all Billingsgate.

To go no farther for an instance than our own market-town, I will match my worthy neighbour, Mrs. Tomkins, cheesemonger, in Queen-street, against any female fish-vender in Christendom. She, in her single person, simple as she stands there behind her counter, shall outscold the whole parish of Wapping.

Deborah Ford, such was Mrs. Tomkins's maiden appellation, was the only daughter of a thrifty and thriving yeoman in the county of Wilts, who having, to her own infinite dissatisfaction and the unspeakable discomfort of her family, remained a spinster for more years than she cared to tell, was at length got rid of by a manœuvring stepmother, who made his marrying Miss Deborah the condition of her supplying Mr. Simon Tomkins, cheesemonger, in Belford, with the whole produce of her dairy,

fusion of fame which our fish-wives owe to the wide spread of our language. Who in the New World ever heard of their Parisian rivals, *les Dames de la Halle!*

celebrated for a certain mock Stilton, which his customers, who got it at about half the price of the real, were wont to extol as incomparably superior to the more genuine and more expensive commodity.

Simon hesitated—looked at Deborah's sour face; for she had by strong persuasion been induced to promise not to scold—that is to say, not to speak, (for, in her case, the terms were synonymous;)—muttered something which might be understood as a civil excuse, and went to the stable to get ready his horse and chaise. In that short walk, however, the prudent swain recollected that a rival cheesemonger had just set up over against him in the same street of the identical town of Belford; that the aforesaid rival was also a bachelor, and, as Mrs. Ford had hinted, would doubtless not be so blind to his own interest as to neglect to take her mock Stilton, with so small an incumbrance as a sour-looking wife, who was said to be the best manager in the county: so that by the time the crafty stepmother reappeared with a parting glass of capital currant wine, (a sort of English stirrup-cup,

which she positively affirmed to be of Deborah's making,) Simon had changed, or, as he expressed it, made up his mind to espouse Miss Deborah, for the benefit of his trade and the good of his customers.

Short as was the courtship, and great as were the pains taken by Mrs. Ford (who performed impossibilities in the way of conciliation) to bring the marriage to bear, it had yet nearly gone off three several times, in consequence of Deborah's tongue, and poor Simon's misgivings, on whose mind, especially on one occasion, the night before the wedding, it was powerfully borne, that all the excellence of the currant wine, and all the advantages of the mock Stilton, were but poor compensations, not only for "peace and happy life," and "awful rule and just supremacy," but for the being permitted, in common parlance, to call his soul his own. Things, however, had gone too far. The stepmother talked of honour and character, and broken hearts; the father hinted at an action for damages, and a certain nephew, Timothy, an attorney-at-law; whilst a younger brother, six feet two in height,

and broad in proportion, more than hinted at a good cudgelling. So Simon married.

Long before the expiration of the honey-moon, he found all his worst fears more than confirmed. His wife—"his mistress," as in the homely country phrase he too truly called her—was the greatest tyrant that ever ruled over a household. Compared with our tigress, Judith Jenkins, now Mrs. Jones, was a lamb. Poor Simon's shopman left him, his maid gave warning, and his apprentice ran away; so that he who could not give warning, and was ashamed to run away, remained the one solitary subject of this despotic queen, the luckless man-of-all-work of that old and well-accustomed shop. Bribery, under the form of high wages and unusual indulgences, did to a certain point remedy this particular evil; so that they came at last only to change servants about once a fortnight on an average, and to lose their apprentices, some by running away and some by buying themselves off, not oftener than twice a year. Indeed, in one remarkable instance, they had the good fortune to keep a cook, who happened to be stone deaf, up-

wards of a twelvemonth; and, in another still more happy case, were provided with a permanent shopman, in the shape of an old pliant rheumatic Frenchman, who had lived in some Italian warehouse in London until fairly worn off his legs, in which plight his importers had discarded him, to find his way back to *la belle France* as best he could. Happening to fall in with him, on going to the London warehouse with an order for Parmesan, receiving an excellent character of him from his employers, and being at his wit's end for a man, Mr. Simon Tomkins, after giving him due notice of his wife's failing, engaged the poor old foreigner, and carried him home to Queen-street in triumph. A much-enduring man was M. Leblanc! Next after his master, he, beyond all doubt, was the favourite object of Deborah's objurgation; but, by the aid of snuff and philosophy, he bore it bravely. "*Mais je suis philosophe!*" cried the poor old Frenchman, shrugging his shoulders, and tapping his box when the larum of his mistress's tongue ran through the house—"*Toutefois je suis philosophe!*" exclaimed he with a patient sigh; and Deborah, who,

without comprehending the phrase, understood it to convey some insinuation against herself, redoubled her clamour at the sound.

Tobacco in its various forms seems to have been the chief consolation of her victims. If snuff and philosophy were Leblanc's resources, a pipe and a tankard were his master's; and in both cases the objects to which they resorted for comfort drew down fresh lectures from their liege lady. She complained of the smell. And of a surety the smell *is* an abomination; only that, her father and her seven brothers, to say nothing of half-a-dozen uncles and some score of cousins, having been as atrociously given to smoking as if they had been born and bred in Germany, so that eight or ten chimneys had been constantly going in one room in the old farm-house of Bevis-land, the fumes of tobacco might be said to be her native air; and Mr. Tomkins's stock-in-trade consisting, besides the celebrated cheese which had so unluckily brought him acquainted with her, of soap, candles, salt-butter, bacon, pickles, oils, and other unsavoury commodities, one would really think that no one par-

ticular stench could greatly increase the ill odours of that most unfragrant shop. She, however, imputed all the steams that invaded her nostrils either to her shopman's snuff or her husband's smoking, and threatened ten times a day to demolish the pipes and the boxes, which were good for nothing, as she observed, but to keep "the men-folk idle and to poison every Christian thing about them;" an affront which both parties endured with a patient silence, which only served to exasperate her wrath.*

* Nothing is so provoking in an adversary as silence. During the great dispute in France about the Ancients and Moderns, in Madame Dacier's time, one of the combatants published a pamphlet with the title, *Réponse au Silence de M. de la Motte.* I confess that I have some sympathy with the writer. It was but the other day that I and another lady were engaged in an argument with one of the stronger sex, and had just beaten him out of the field—were on the very point of giving him the *coup de grace,* when all on a sudden my gentleman made us a low bow, and declared that we should have it our own way—that he would not say another word on the subject. I don't know that I was ever so much provoked in my life. To be defrauded of our just victory (for of course we were right), whilst the cunning wretch (a clever man, too, which made it worse) looked as complacent and as smiling as if he had yielded the point from pure compassion to our weakness! Mrs. Tomkins would have boxed his ears. It is just as if an

Find it where he would, much need had poor Mr. Tomkins of comfort. Before his marriage, he had been a spruce dapper little man, with blue eyes, a florid complexion, and hair of the colour commonly called sandy,—alert in movement, fluent in speech, and much addicted to laughing, whether at his own jokes or the jokes of his neighbours; he belonged to the Bachelors' Club and the Odd Fellows, was a great man at the cricket-ground, and a person of some consideration at the vestry; in short, was the *beau idéal* of the young thriving country tradesman of thirty years ago.

He had not been married half a year before such an alteration took place as really would have seemed incredible. His dearest friends did not know him. The whole man was changed —shrunk, shrivelled, withered, dwindled into nothing. The hen-pecked husband in the farce, carrying his wife's clogs in one hand and her bandbox in the other, and living on the

opponent at chess, whose pawns are almost gone, and whose pieces are taken, whose game, in short, is desperate—and who must in a move or two be checkmated—should suddenly proclaim himself tired, and sweep away the board. I wonder what Mrs. Tomkins would say to that!

"tough drumsticks of turkeys, and the fat flaps of shoulders of mutton," was but a type of him. The spirit of his youth was departed. He gave up attending the coffee-house or the cricket-ground, ceased to joke or to laugh at jokes; and he who had had at club and vestry "a voice potential as double as the *mayor's*," could hardly be brought to answer Yes or No to a customer. The man was evidently in an atrophy. His wife laid the blame to his smoking, and his friends laid it to his wife, whilst poor Simon smoked on and said nothing. It was a parallel case to Peter Jenkins's, and Stephen Lane might have saved him: but Stephen not being amongst his cronies, (for Simon was a Tory,) and Simon making no complaint, that chance was lost. He lingered through the first twelve months after their marriage, and early in the second he died, leaving his widow in excellent circumstances, the possessor of a flourishing business and the mother of a little boy, to whom she (the will having of course been made under her supervision) was constituted sole guardian.

Incredible as it may seem, considering the

life she led him while alive, Deborah was really sorry for poor Simon—perhaps from a touch of remorse, perhaps because she lost in him the most constant and patient listener to her various orations—perhaps from a mixture of both feelings; at all events, sorry she was; and as grief in her showed itself in the very novel form of gentleness, so that for four-and-twenty hours she scolded nobody, the people about her began to be seriously alarmed for her condition, and were about to call in the physician who had attended the defunct, to prescribe for the astounding placability of the widow, when something done or left undone, by the undertaker or his man, produced the effect which medical writers are pleased to call "an effort of nature;" she began to scold, and scolded all through the preparations for the funeral, and the funeral itself, and the succeeding ceremonies of will-reading, legacy-paying, bill-settling, stock-valuing, and so forth, with an energy and good-will and unwearying perseverance that left nothing to be feared on the score of her physical strength. John Wesley preaching four sermons, and Kean playing

Richard three times in one day, might have envied her power of lungs. She could have spoken Lord Brougham's famous six hours' speech on the Law Reform without exhaustion or hoarseness. But what do I talk of a six hours' speech? She could have spoken a whole night's debate in her own single person, without let or pause, or once dropping her voice, till the division, so prodigious was her sostenuto. Matthews and Miss Kelly were nothing to her. And the exercise agreed with her—she throve on it.

So for full twenty years after the death of Mr. Tomkins did she reign and scold in the dark, dingy, low-browed, well-accustomed shop of which she was now the sole directress. M. Pierre Leblanc continued to be her man of business; and as, besides his boasted philosophy, he added a little French pliancy and flattery of which he did not boast, and a great deal of dexterity in business and integrity, as well as clearness in his accompts, they got on together quite as well as could be expected. The trade flourished; for, to do Deborah justice, she was not only a good manager, in the lowest sense

of the term—which, commonly speaking, means only frugal,—but she was, in the most liberal acceptation of the words, prudent, sagacious, and honest in her pecuniary dealings, buying the very best commodities, and selling them at such a fair and moderate profit as ensured a continuation of the best custom of the county —the more especially as her sharp forbidding countenance and lank raw-boned figure were seldom seen in the shop. People said (but what will not people say?) that one reason for her keeping away from such excellent scolding-ground was to be found in *les doux yeux* of M. Pierre Leblanc, who, withered, wizened, broken-down cripple as he was, was actually suspected of having made an offer to his mistress;—a story which I wholly disbelieve, not only because I do not think that the poor philosopher, whose courage was rather of a passive than an active nature, would ever have summoned resolution to make such a proposal; but because he never, as far as I can discover, was observed in the neighbourhood with a scratched face—a catastrophe which would as certainly have followed the audacity

in question, as the night follows the day. Moreover, it is bad philosophy to go hunting about for a remote and improbable cause, when a sufficient and likely one is close at hand; and there was, in immediate juxta-position with Mrs. Tomkins's shop, reason enough to keep her out of it to the end of time.

I have said that this shop, although spacious and not incommodious, was dark and low-browed, forming part of an old-fashioned irregular tenement, in an old-fashioned irregular street. The next house, with a sort of very deep and square bay-window, which was, by jutting out so as to overshadow it, in some sort the occasion of the gloom which, increased perhaps by the dingy nature of the commodities, did unquestionably exist in this great depository of cheese and chandlery-ware, happened to be occupied by a dealer in whalebone in its various uses, stays, umbrellas, parasols, and so forth,—a fair, mild, gentle Quakeress—a female Friend, with two or three fair smiling daughters, the very models of all that was quiet and peaceful, who, without even speaking to the furious virago, were a standing rebuke to that "perturbed spirit."

The deep bay-window was their constant dwelling-place. There they sat tranquilly working from morning to night, gliding in and out with a soft stealing pace like a cat, sleek, dimpled, and dove-eyed, with that indescribable nicety and purity of dress and person, and that blameless modesty of demeanour, for which the female Friend is so generally distinguished. Not a fault could Mrs. Tomkins discover in her next neighbour,—but if ever woman hated her next neighbour, she hated Rachel May.

The constant sight of this object of her detestation was, of course, one of the evils of Mrs. Tomkins's prosperous life;—but she had many others to fight with—most of them, of course, of her own seeking. What she would have done without a grievance, it is difficult to guess; but she had so great a genius for making one out of everything and every person connected with her, that she was never at a loss in that particular. Her stepmother she had always regarded as a natural enemy; and at her father's death, little as she, generally speaking, coveted money, she contrived to quarrel with her whole family on the division of his

property, chiefly on the score of an old japanned chest of drawers not worth ten shillings, which her brothers and sisters were too much of her own temper to relinquish.

Then her son, on whom she doted with a peevish, grumbling, fretful, discontented fondness that always took the turn of finding fault, was, as she used reproachfully to tell him, just like his father. The poor child, do what he would, could never please her. If he were well, she scolded; if he were sick, she scolded; if he were silent, she scolded; if he talked, she scolded. She scolded if he laughed, and she scolded if he cried.

Then the people about her were grievances, of course, from Mr. Pierre Leblanc downward. She turned off her porter for apprehending a swindler, and gave away her yard-dog for barking away some thieves. There was no foreseeing what would displease her. She caused a beggar to be taken up for insulting her, because he, with his customary cant, blessed her good-humoured face; and she complained to the mayor of the fine fellow Punch for the converse reason, because he stopped before her windows and mimicked her at her own door.

Then she met with a few calamities of which her temper was more remotely the cause;—such as being dismissed from the dissenting congregation that she frequented, for making an over free use of the privilege which pious ladies sometimes assume of quarrelling with their acquaintance on spiritual grounds, and venting all manner of angry anathema for the love of God; an affront that drove her to church the very next Sunday. Also, she got turned off by her political party in the heat of a contested election, for insulting friends and foes in the bitterness of her zeal, and thereby endangering the return of her favourite candidate. A provincial poet, whose works she had abused, wrote a song in her dispraise; and three attorneys brought actions against her for defamation.

These calamities notwithstanding, Deborah's life might for one-and-twenty years be accounted tolerably prosperous. At the end of that time, two misfortunes befel her nearly at once,—Pierre Leblanc died, and her son attained his majority.

"Mother!" said the young man, as they

were dining together off a couple of ducks two days after the old shopman's funeral; "Mother!" said John Tomkins, mustering up his courage, "I think I was one-and-twenty last Saturday."

"And what of that?" replied Deborah, putting on her stormiest face; "I 'm mistress here, and mistress I 'll continue: your father, poor simpleton that he was, was not fool enough to leave his house and business to an ignorant boy. The stock and trade are mine, sir, and shall be mine, in spite of all the undutiful sons in Christendom. One-and-twenty, forsooth! What put that in your head, I wonder? What do you mean by talking of one-and-twenty, sirrah?"

"Only, mother," replied John meekly, "that though father left you the house and business, he left me three thousand pounds, which, by your prudent management, are now seven thousand; and uncle William Ford, he left me the new Warren Farm; and so, mother, I was thinking, with your good-will, to marry and settle."

"Marry!" exclaimed Mrs. Tomkins, too

angry even to scold, — "marry!" and she laid down her knife and fork as if choking.

"Yes, mother!" rejoined John, taking courage from his mother's unexpected quietness, "Rachel May's pretty grand-daughter Rebecca; she is but half a Quaker, you know, for her mother was a Churchwoman: and so, with your good leave,"—and smack went all that remained of the ducks in poor John's face; an effort of nature that probably saved Deborah's life, and enabled her to give vent to an oration to which I have no power to do justice; but of which the non-effect was so decided, that John and his pretty Quakeress were married within a fortnight, and are now happily settled at the new Warren House; whilst Mrs. Tomkins, having hired a good-humoured, good-looking, strapping Irishman of three-and-twenty, as her new foreman, is said to have it in contemplation, by way, as she says, of punishing her son, to make him, the aforesaid Irish foreman, successor to Simon Tomkins as well as to Pierre Leblanc, and is actually reported, (though the fact seems incredible,) to have become so amiable under the influence of the tender passion,

as to have passed three days without scolding anybody in the house or out. The little God of Love is, to be sure, a powerful deity, especially when he comes somewhat out of season; but this transition of character does seem to me too violent a change even for a romance, much more for this true history; and I hold it no lack of charity to continue doubtful of Deborah's reformation till after the honeymoon.

Note.

MADAME PERNELLE, ELMIRE, MARIANNE, CLEANTE, DAMIS, DORINE, FLIPOTE.

MADAME PERNELLE.

Allons, Flipote, allons; que d'eux je me délivre.

ELMIRE.

Vous marchez d'un tel pas qu'on a peine à vous suivre.

MADAME PERNELLE.

Laissez, ma bru, laissez; ne venez pas plus loin:
Ce sont toutes façons dont je n'ai pas besoin.

ELMIRE.

De ce que l'on vous doit envers vous l'on s'acquitte.
Mais, ma mère, d'où vient que vous sortez si vit ?

MADAME PERNELLE.

C'est que je ne puis voir tout ce ménage-ci,
Et que de me complaire on ne prend nul souci.

Oui, je sors de chez vous fort mal édifiée;
Dans toutes mes leçons j'y suis contrariée;
On n'y respecte rien, chacun y parle haut,
Et c'est tout justement la cour du roi Pétaud.

DORINE.

Si

MADAME PERNELLE.

Vous êtes, ma mie, une fille suivante
Un peu trop forte en gueule, et fort impertinente;
Vous vous mêlez sur tout de dire votre avis.

DAMIS.

Mais...

MADAME PERNELLE.

Vous êtes un sot, en trois lettres, mon fils;
C'est moi qui vous le dis, qui suis votre grand'mère;
Et j'ai prédit cent fois à mon fils, votre père,
Que vous preniez tout l'air d'un méchant garnement,
Et ne lui donneriez jamais que du tourment.

MARIANNE.

Je crois...

MADAME PERNELLE.

Mon Dieu! sa sœur, vous faites la discrète;
Et vous n'y touchez pas, tant vous semblez doucette!
Mais il n'est, comme on dit, pire eau que l'eau qui dort;
Et vous menez, sous cape, un train que je hais fort.

ELMIRE.

Mais, ma mère...

MADAME PERNELLE.

Ma bru, qu'il ne vous en déplaise,
Votre conduite en tout est tout-à-fait mauvaise;
Vous devriez leur mettre un bon exemple aux yeux;
Et leur défunte mère en usait beaucoup mieux.

Vous êtes dépensière ; et cet état me blesse,
Que vous alliez vêtue ainsi qu'une princesse,
Quiconque à son mari veut plaire seulement,
Ma bru, n'a pas besoin de tant d'ajustement.

CLEANTE.

Mais, madame, après tout...

MADAME PERNELLE.

Pour vous, monsieur son frère,
Je vous estime fort, vous aime, et vous révère :
Mais enfin, si j'étais de mon fils, son époux,
Je vous prierais bien fort de n'entrer point chez nous.
Sans cesse vous prêchez des maximes de vivre
Qui par d'honnêtes gens ne se doivent point suivre.
Je vous parle un peu franc ; mais c'est là mon humeur,
Et je ne mâche point ce que j'ai sur le cœur.

DAMIS.

Votre monsieur Tartufe est bien heureux, sans doute.

MADAME PERNELLE.

C'est un homme de bien, qu'il faut que l'on écoute ;
Et je ne puis souffrir, sans me mettre en courroux,
De le voir quereller par un fou comme vous.

DAMIS.

Quoi ! je souffrirai, moi, qu'un cagot de critique
Vienne usurper céans un pouvoir tyrannique ;
Et que nous ne puissions à rien nous divertir,
Si ce beau monsieur-là n'y daigne consentir ?

DORINE.

S'il le faut écouter et croire à ses maximes,
On ne peut faire rien qu'on ne fasse des crimes :
Car il contrôle tout, ce critique zélé.

MADAME PERNELLE.

Et tout ce qu'il contrôle est fort bien contrôlé.

* * * * * *

MADAME PERNELLE, *à Elmire.*

Voilà les contes bleus qu'il vous faut pour vous plaire,
Ma bru. L'on est chez vous contrainte de se taire:
Car madame, à jaser, tient le dé tout le jour.
Mais enfin je prétends discourir à mon tour:
Je vous dis que mon fils n'a rien fait de plus sage
Qu'en recueillant chez soi ce dévot personnage;
Que le ciel, au besoin, l'a céans envoyé
Pour redresser à tous votre esprit fourvoyé;
Que, pour votre salut, vous le devez entendre;
Et qu'il ne reprend rien qui ne soit à reprendre.
Ces visites, ces bals, ces conversations,
Sont du malin esprit toutes inventions.
Là, jamais on n'entend de pieuses paroles;
Ce sont propos oisifs, chansons et fariboles:
Bien souvent le prochain en a sa bonne part,
Et l'on y sait médire et du tiers et du quart.
Enfin les gens sensés ont leurs têtes troublées
De la confusion de telles assemblées:
Mille caquets divers s'y font en moins de rien;
Et, comme l'autre jour un docteur dit fort bien,
C'est véritablement la tour de Babylone,
Car chacun y babille, et tout du long de l'aune:
Et, pour conter l'histoire où ce point l'engagea...
(montrant Cléante.)
Voilà-t-il pas monsieur qui ricane déjà!
Allez chercher vos fous qui vous donnent à rire,
(à Elmire.)
Et sans... Adieu, ma bru; je ne veux plus rien dire.

Sachez que pour céans j'en rabats de moitié,
Et qu'il fera beau temps quand j'y mettrai le pié.
(donnant un soufflet à Flipote.)
Allons, vous, vous rêvez, et bayez aux corneilles.
Jour de Dieu ! je saurai vous frotter les oreilles.
Marchons, gaupe, marchons.

Tartufe—Acte I. Scène I.

THE YOUNG MARKET-WOMAN.

BELFORD is so populous a place, and the country round so thickly inhabited, that the Saturday's market is almost as well attended as an ordinary fair. So early as three or four o'clock in the morning, the heavy waggons (one with a capital set of bells) begin to pass our house, and increase in number—to say nothing of the admixture of other vehicles, from the humble donkey-cart to the smart gig, and hosts of horsemen and footpeople—until nine or ten, when there is some pause in the affluence of market folk till about one, when the lightened wains, laden, not with corn, but with rosy-cheeked country lasses, begin to show signs of travelling homeward, and continue passing at no very distant intervals until twilight. There is more traffic on our road in one single Saturday than on all the other days of the week put

together. And if we feel the stirring movement of "market-day" so strongly in the country,* it may be imagined how much it must enliven the town.

Saturday at noon is indeed the very time to see Belford, which in general has the fault, not uncommon in provincial towns, of wanting bustle. The old market-place, always picturesque from its shape (an unequal triangle), its size, the diversified outline and irregular architecture of the houses, and the beautiful Gothic church by which it is terminated, is then all alive with the busy hum of traffic, the agricultural wealth and the agricultural population of the district. From the poor farmer with his load of corn, up to the rich mealman and the great proprietor, all the "landed interest" is there, mixed with jobbers and chapmen of every description, cattle-dealers, millers, brew-

* My dog Dash, who regularly attends his master to the Bench, where he is the only dog admitted, and a great pet, knows Saturday as well as I do; follows my father as closely as his shadow from the moment that he comes down stairs; and would probably break through the door or jump through a closed window, rather than suffer the phaeton to set off without him.

ers, maltsters, justices going to the Bench, constables and overseers following to be sworn, carriers, carters, errand-boys, tradesmen, shopmen, apprentices, gentlemen's servants, and gentlemen in their own persons, mixed with all the riff-raff of the town, and all the sturdy beggars of the country, and all the noisy urchins of both.

Noise indeed is the prime characteristic of the Belford market-day—noise of every sort, from the heavy rumbling of so many loaded waggons over the paved market-place, to the crash of crockery-ware in the narrow passage of Princes' Street, as the stall is knocked down by the impetus of a cart full of turnips, or the squall of the passengers of the Southton caravan, upset by the irresistible momentum of the Hadley-mill team.

But the noisiest, and perhaps the prettiest places, were the Piazza at the end of Saint Nicholas' church, appropriated by long usage to the female venders of fruit and vegetables, where certain old women, as well known to the *habitués* of the market as the church-tower, were wont to *flyte* at each other, and at their

customers, with the genius for vituperation for which ladies of their profession have long been celebrated; and a detached spot called the Butter-market, at the back of the Market-place proper, where the more respectable basket-women, the daughters and wives of farmers, and the better order of the female peasantry, used to bring eggs, butter, and poultry for sale on Wednesdays and Saturdays.

A pretty and a diversified place was the Butter-market; for besides the commodities, dead and alive, brought by the honest countrywomen, a few stalls were set out with straw hats, and caps and ribbons, and other feminine gear, to tempt them in return; and here and there an urchin of the more careful sort would bring *his* basket of tame rabbits, or wood-pigeons, or young ferrets, or squeaking guinea-pigs, or a nest of downy owls or gaping jackdaws, or cages of linnets and thrushes, to tempt the townsfolk. Nay, in the season, some thoughtful little maid of eight or ten would bring nosegays of early primroses or sweet violets, or wall-flowers, or stocks, to add a few pence to the family store.

A pleasant sight was the Butter-market, with its comely country wives, its modest lasses and neat children,—pleasant and cheerful, in spite of the din of so many women, buyers and sellers, all talking together, and the noise of turkeys, geese, ducks, chickens, and guinea-pigs;—but the pleasantest sight there was a young damsel famous for eggs and poultry, and modest beauty, known by the name of "pretty Bessy,"—but not a regular attendant of the market, her goods being in such request that she seldom had occasion to come so far, the families round, ourselves amongst the rest, dealing constantly with her.

We are persons of great regularity in our small affairs of every class, from the petty dealings of housekeeping to the larger commerce of acquaintanceship. The friends who have once planted us by their fireside, and made us feel as if at home there, can no more get rid of our occasional presence, than they could root out that other tenacious vegetable, the Jerusalem artichoke; even if they were to pull us up by the stalk and toss us over the wall (an experiment by the way, which, to do

them justice, they have never tried), I do verily believe, that in the course of a few months we should spring up again in the very same place: and our tradespeople, trifling as is the advantage to be derived from our custom, may yet reckon upon it with equal certainty. They are, as it happens, civil, honest, and respectable, the first people in their line in the good town of Belford; but, were they otherwise, the circumstance would hardly affect our invincible constancy. The world is divided between the two great empires of habit and novelty; the young following pretty generally in the train of the new-fangled sovereign, whilst we of an elder generation adhere with similar fidelity to the *ancien régime*. I, especially, am the very bond-slave of habit—love old friends, old faces, old books, old scenery, old flowers, old associations of every sort and kind—nay, although a woman, and one not averse to that degree of decoration which belongs to the suitable and the becoming, I even love old fashions and old clothes; and can so little comprehend why we should tire of a thing because we have had it long, that, a favourite pelisse having be-

come shabby, I this very day procured with some difficulty silk of the exact colour and shade, and, having ordered it to be made in direct conformity with the old pattern, shall have the satisfaction next Sunday of donning a new dress, which my neighbours, the shoemaker's wife and the baker's daughters, who have in their heads an absolute inventory of my apparel, will infallibly mistake for the old one.

After this striking instance, the courteous reader will have no difficulty in comprehending that the same "auld-lang-syne" feeling, which leads me to think no violets so fragrant as those which grow on a certain sunny bank in Kibes Lane, and no cherries so sweet as those from the great mayduke, on the south wall of our old garden, should also induce me to prefer before all oranges those which come from Mrs. Hollis's shop, at the corner of the churchyard—a shop which we have frequented ever since I knew what an orange was; and, for the same reason, to rank before all the biscuits which ever were invented, a certain most seducing, thin, and crisp composition, as light as foam and as tasteless as spring-water, the handiwork of

Mrs. Purdy, of the Market-place in the good town of Belford; as well as to place above all other poultry that which cackles in the baskets of "pretty Bessy." The oranges and biscuits are good in themselves, and so are the ducks and chickens; but some of their superiority is undoubtedly to be ascribed to the partiality generated by habit.

Another of the persons with whom we had in our small way dealt longest, and whom we liked best, was old Matthew, the matseller. As surely as February came, would Matthew present his bent person and withered though still ruddy face at our door, with the three rush mats which he knew that our cottage required; and as surely did he receive fifteen shillings, lawful money of Great Britain, in return for his commodity, notwithstanding an occasional remonstrance from some flippant housemaid or domineering cook, who would endeavour to send him off with an assurance that his price was double that usually given, and that no mat ever made with rushes was or could be worth five shillings. "His honour always deals with me," was Matthew's mild re-

sponse, and an appeal to the parlour never failed to settle matters to his entire satisfaction. In point of fact, Matthew's mats were honestly worth the money; and we enjoyed in this case the triple satisfaction of making a fair bargain, dealing with an old acquaintance, and relieving, in the best way—that of employment—the wants of age and of poverty: for, although Matthew's apparel was accurately clean and tidy, and his thin, wrinkled cheek as hale and ruddy as a summer apple, yet the countless patches on his various garments, and the spare, trembling figure, bent almost double and crippled with rheumatism, told a too legible story of infirmity and penury. Except on his annual visit with his merchandise, we never saw the good old matmaker; nor did I even know where he resided, until the want of an additional mat for my greenhouse, towards the end of last April, induced me to make inquiry concerning his habitation.

I had no difficulty in obtaining a direction to his dwelling; and found that, for a poor old matmaker, Matthew was a person of more consideration and note in our little world than I

could have expected, being, in a word, one of the honestest, soberest, and most industrious men in the neighbourhood.

He lived, I found, in Barkham Dingle, a deep woodland dell, communicating with a large tract of unenclosed moors and commons in the next parish, convenient doubtless to Matthew, as affording the rushes of which his mats were constructed, as well as heath for brooms, of which he was said to have lately established a manufacture, and which were almost equally celebrated for durability and excellence with the articles that he had made for so many years. In Barkham Dingle lived old Matthew, with a grand-daughter, who was, I found, also renowned for industry and good-humour; and, one fine afternoon towards the end of April, I set forth in my little pony-phaeton, driven by that model of all youthful serving-men, our boy John, to make my purchase.

Our road lay through a labyrinth of cross-country lanes, intermingled with tiny patches of village greens, where every here and there a score or two of sheep, the small flock of some

petty farmer, were nestled with their young lambs among the golden gorse and the feathery broom, and which started up, bleating, at the sound of our wheels and the sight of Dash (far too well-bred a dog to dream of molesting them), as if our peaceful procession had really been something to be frightened at. Rooks were wheeling above our heads, wood-pigeons flying across the fields; the shrill cry of the plover mixed with the sweet song of the nightingale and the monotonous call of the cuckoo; whilst every hedge echoed with the thousand notes of the blackbird, the linnet, the thrush, and "all the finches of the grove." Geese and ducks, with their train of callow younglings, were dabbling in every pool; little bands of straggling children were wandering through the lanes; everything, in short, gave token of the loveliest of the seasons, the fresh and joyous spring. Vegetation was, however, unusually backward. The blossom of the sloe, called by the country people "the blackthorn winter," still lingered in the hedges, mingling its snowy garlands with the deep, rich brown of the budding oak and the tender green of the elm; the

primroses of March still mingled with the cowslips, pansies, orchises, and wild hyacinths of April; and the flower of the turnip was only just beginning to diffuse its honeyed odours (equal in fragrance to the balmy tassels of the lime) in the most sheltered nooks or the sunniest exposures. The "blessed sun" himself seemed rather bright than warm: the season was, in short, full three weeks backwarder than it should have been according to the almanack. Still it was spring, beautiful spring! and, as we drew near to the old beech-wood called Barkham Dingle, we felt in its perfection all the charm of the scene and the hour.

Although the country immediately round was unenclosed, as had been fully proved by the last half-mile of undulating common, interspersed by old shaggy trees and patches (islets, as it were) of tangled underwood, as well as by a few rough ponies and small cows belonging to the country people; yet the lanes leading to it had been intersected by frequent gates, from the last of which a pretty, little, rosy, smiling girl, to whom I had tossed a penny for opening it, had sprung across the common,

like a fawn, to be ready with her services at that leading into the Dingle, down which a rude cart-track, seldom used unless for the conveyance of faggots or brushwood, led by a picturesque but by no means easy descent.

Leaving chaise, and steed, and driver, to wait our return at the gate, Dash and I pursued our way by a winding yet still precipitous path to the bottom of the dell. Nothing could be more beautiful than the scene. On every side, steep, shelving banks, clothed with magnificent oaks and beeches, the growth of centuries, descended gradually, like some vast amphitheatre, to a clear, deep piece of water, lying like a mirror in the midst of the dark woods, and letting light and sunshine into the picture. The leaves of the beech were just bursting into a tender green from their shining sheaths, and the oaks bore still the rich brown, which of their unnumbered tints is perhaps the loveliest; but every here and there a scattered horse-chestnut, or plane, or sycamore, had assumed its summer verdure: the weeping birch, "the lady of the woods," was breaking from the bud, the holly glitter-

ing in its unvaried glossiness, the hawthorn and the briar-rose in full leaf, and the ivy and woodbine twisting their bright wreaths over the rugged trunks of the gigantic forest-trees; so that green formed even now the prevailing colour of the wood. The ground, indeed, was enamelled with flowers like a parterre. Primroses, cowslips, pansies, orchises, ground-ivy, and wild hyacinths, were blended in gorgeous profusion with the bright wood-vetch, the light wood-anemone, and the delicate wood-sorrel*, which sprang from the mossy roots of the beeches, unrivalled in grace and beauty, more elegant even than the lily of the valley that grew by its side. Nothing could exceed the delightfulness of that winding wood-walk.

I soon came in sight of the place of my destination, a low-browed, thatched cottage, perched like a wild-duck's nest at the very edge of the pool, and surrounded by a little garden redeemed from the forest — a small *clearing*, where cultivated flowers, and beds of berry-bushes, and pear and cherry trees, in

* There is a pink variety of this beautiful wild flower; but the pencilled white is the most elegant.

full blossom, contrasted strangely yet pleasantly with the wild scenery around.

The cottage was very small, yet it had the air of snugness and comfort which one loves to associate with the dwellings of the industrious peasantry. A goodly faggot-pile, a donkey-shed, and a pigsty, evidently inhabited, confirmed this impression; and geese and ducks swimming in the water, and chickens straying about the door, added to the cheerfulness of the picture.

As I approached, I recognised an old acquaintance in a young girl, who, with a straw basket in her hand, was engaged in feeding the cocks and hens—no less a person than pretty Bessy the young market-woman, of whom I have before spoken, celebrated for rearing the earliest ducks and the fattest and whitest chickens ever seen in these parts. Any Wednesday or Saturday morning, during the spring or summer, might Bessy be seen on the road to Belford, tripping along by the side of her little cart, hardly larger than a wheelbarrow, drawn by a sedate and venerable donkey, and laden with coops full of cackling or babbling

inmates, together with baskets of fresh eggs—for Bessy's commodities were as much prized at the breakfast as at the dinner table. She meant, as I have said, to keep the market; but, somehow or other, she seldom reached it; the quality of her merchandise being held in such estimation by the families around, that her coops and baskets were generally emptied before they gained their place of destination.

Perhaps the popularity of the vender had something to do with the rapid sale of her poultry-ware. Never did any one more completely realize the *beau idéal* of a young, happy, innocent, country girl, than Matthew's grand-daughter. Fresh and fair, her rosy cheeks mantling with blushes, and her cherry lips breaking into smiles, she was the very milkmaid of Isaac Walton; and there was an old-fashioned neatness and simplicity, a complete absence of all finery, in her attire, together with a modest sweetness in her round young voice, a rustic grace in her little curtsey, and, above all, a total unconsciousness of her charms, which not only heightened the effect, but deepened and strengthened the impression.

No one that ever had seen them could forget Bessy's innocent smiles.

At present, however, the poor girl was evidently in no smiling mood; and, as I was thridding with care and labour the labyrinths of an oak newly felled and partly barked, which lay across the path, to the great improvement of its picturesqueness (there are few objects that so much enhance the beauty of woodland scenery), and the equal augmentation of its difficulty, I could not help observing how agitated and preoccupied the little damsel seemed. Her cheek had lost its colour, her step was faltering, and the trembling hand with which she was distributing the corn from her basket could hardly perform its task. Her head was turned anxiously towards the door, as if something important were going forward within the house; and it was not until I was actually by her side, and called her by name, that she perceived me.

The afternoon, although bright and pleasant for the season, was one of those in which the sun sometimes amuses himself by playing at bopeep. The sky had become overcast shortly

after I entered the Dingle, and, by the time I had surmounted the last tall jutting bare bough of the oak, some of the branches of which I was fain to scramble over and some to creep through, and had fairly reached the cottage door, a sudden shower was whistling through the trees with such violence as to render both Dash and myself very glad to accept Bessy's embarrassed invitation and get under shelter from the pelting of the storm.

My entrance occasioned an immediate and somewhat awkward pause in a discussion that had been carried on, apparently with considerable warmth, between my good old host, Matthew, who, with a half-finished mat in his hand, was sitting in a low wicker chair on one side of the hearth, and a visiter, also of my acquaintance, who was standing against the window; and, with the natural feeling of repugnance to such an intrusion, I had hardly taken the seat offered me by Bessy and given my commission to her grandfather, before I proposed to go away, saying that I saw they were busy, that the rain was nothing, that I had a carriage waiting, that I particularly

wished to get home, and so forth—all the civil falsehoods, in short, with which, finding oneself *madame de trop*, one attempts to escape from an uncomfortable situation.

My excuses were, however, altogether useless. Bessy would not hear of my departure; Farmer White, my fellow-visiter, assured me that the rain was coming down harder than ever; and the old matmaker declared that, so far from my being in the way, all the world was welcome to hear what he had to say, and he had just been wishing for some discreet body to judge of the farmer's behaviour. And, the farmer professing himself willing that I should be made acquainted with the matter, and perfectly ready to abide by my opinion—provided it coincided with his own—I resumed my seat opposite to Matthew, whilst poor Bessy, blushing and ashamed, placed herself on a low stool in a corner of the little room, and began making friends with Dash.

"The long and the short of the matter is, ma'am," quoth old Matthew, "that Jem White—I dare say you know Jem; he 's a good lad and a 'dustrious—and my Bessy there—and

she's a good girl and a 'dustrious too, thof I say it that should not say it — have been keeping company, like, for these two years past; and now, just as I thought they were going to marry and settle in the world, down comes his father, the farmer there, and wants him to marry another wench and be false-hearted to my girl."

"I never knew that he courted her, ma'am, till last night," interrupted the farmer.

"And who does he want Jem to marry?" pursued the old man, warming as he went on. "Who but Farmer Brookes's fine daughter 'Gusta — Miss 'Gusta as they call her — who 's just come back from Belford boarding-school, and goes about the country in her silks and her satins, with her veils and her fine worked bags, — who but she! as if she was a lady born, like madam there! Now, my Bessy ——"

"I have not a word to say against Bessy," again interrupted the farmer; "she's a good girl, and a pretty girl, and an industrious girl. I have not a word to say against Bessy. But the fact is, that I have had an offer of the Holm Farm for Jem, and therefore ——"

"And a fine farmer's wife 'Gusta Brookes will make!" quoth the matmaker, interrupting Master White in his turn. "A pretty farmer's wife! She that can do nothing on earth but jabber French, and read story-books, and thump on the music! Now, there 's my girl can milk, and churn, and bake, and brew, and cook, and wash, and make, and mend, and rear poultry—there are not such ducks and chickens as Bessy's for ten miles round. Ask madam—she always deals with Bessy, and so do all the gentlefolks between here and Belford."

"I am not saying a word against Bessy," replied Farmer White; "she 's a good girl, and a pretty girl, as I said before; and I am very sorry for the whole affair. But the Holm Farm is a largish concern, and will take a good sum of money to stock it—more money than I can command; and Augusta Brookes, besides what her father can do for her at his death, has four hundred pounds of her own left her by her grandmother, which, with what I can spare, will be about enough for the purpose; and that made me think of the match, though the matter is still quite unsettled. You know,

Master Matthew, one can't expect that Bessy, good girl as she is, should have any money—"

"Oh, that's it!" exclaimed the old man of the mats. "You don't object to the wench then, nor to her old grandfather, if 'twas not for the money?"

"Not in the least," replied the farmer; "she's a good girl, and a pretty girl. I like her full as well as Augusta Brookes, and I am afraid that Jem likes her much better. And, as for yourself, Master Matthew, why I've known you these fifty years and never heard man, woman, or child speak a misword of you in my life. I respect you, man! And I am heartily sorry to vex you, and that good little girl yonder. Don't cry so, Bessy; pray don't cry!" And the good-natured farmer well nigh cried for company.

"No, don't cry, Bessy, because there's no need," rejoined her grandfather. "I thought mayhap it was out of pride that Farmer White would not suffer Jem to marry my little girl. But, since it's only the money," continued the old man, fumbling amidst a vast variety of well-patched garments, until from the pocket

of some under-jacket he produced a greasy brown leather book — "since 'tis only Miss 'Gusta's money that 's wanted to stock the Holm, why that 's but reasonable; and we 'll see whether your four hundred won't go as far as hers. Look at them dirty bits of paper, farmer — they 're of the right sort, an't they ?" cried Matthew, with a chuckle. "I called 'em in, because I thought they 'd be wanted for her portion, like; and, when the old matmaker dies, there 'll be a hundred or two more into the bargain. Take the money, man, can't ye ? and don't look so 'stounded. It 's honestly come by, I promise you, — all 'dustry and 'conomy, like. Her father, he was 'dustrious, and he left her a bit; and her mother, she was 'dustrious too, and she left her a bit; and I, thof I should not say it, have been 'dustrious all my life; and she, poor thing, is more 'dustrious than any of us. Ay, that 's right. Give her a hearty kiss, man; and call in Jem—I 'll warrant he 's not far off — and we 'll fix the wedding-day over a jug of home-brewed. And madam there," pursued the happy old man, as with most sincere congratulations and good

wishes I rose to depart, "madam there, who looks so pleased and speaks so kindly, may be sure of her mat. I'm a 'dustrious man, thof I say it that should not say it; and Bessy's a 'dustrious girl; and, in my mind, there's nothing beats 'dustry in high or in low."

And, with this axiom from the old mat-maker, Dash and I took our leave of four as happy people—for by this time Jem had joined the party—as could well be found under the sun.

HESTER.

AMONGST the most prominent of the Belfordians who figured at the Wednesday night's club at the King's Arms, was a certain portly personage, rather broader than he was long, who was known generally through the town by the familiar appellation of Nat Kinlay. By calling, Nat

"Was,—could he help it?—a special attorney;"

by habit and inclination, a thorough good fellow—played the best rubber, sang the best song, told the best story, made the best punch—and drank the most of it when made, of any man in Belford. Besides these accomplishments, he was eminently agreeable to men of all ranks; had a pleasant word for everybody; was friendly with the rich, generous to the poor, never out of spirits, never out of humour, and,

in spite of the quips and cranks in which he delighted, never too clever for his company: the most popular person in the place was, beyond all doubt, Nat Kinlay.

In spite, however, of his universal popularity, and of a general tendency to overrate his colloquial talents, no attorney in the town had so little employment. His merits made against him in his profession almost as strongly as his faults: frank, liberal, open-hearted, and indulgent, as well as thoughtless, careless, daring, and idle; a despiser of worldly wisdom, a hater of oppression, and a reconciler of strife—he was about the last person to whom the crafty, the overbearing, or the litigious, would resort for aid or counsel. The prudent were repelled by his heedlessness and procrastination, and the timid alarmed at his levity; so that the circumstance which he told as a good joke at the club, of a spider having spun a web over the lock of his office-door (as over the poor-box in Hogarth's famous picture), was no uncommon occurrence at his residence. Except by a few of the poorest and wildest of his boon companions,—penniless clients, who lived at his table

all the while their suits were pending, and took care to disappear just before their cause was lost,—the mysterious-looking brass knob, with "OFFICE-BELL" underneath it, at Mr. Kinlay's excellent house in Queen-street, remained unrung from term to term.

Startling as such a circumstance would have seemed to most professional men, it was long before this total absence of profitable employment made the slightest impression on Nat Kinlay. The son of an affluent tradesman in a distant county, he had been articled to a solicitor, rather as a step in station, an advance towards gentility, than with any view to the money-making facilities of that lucrative calling. His father, judging from his own frugal habits, thought that Nat, the only child amongst a large family of wealthy brothers, would have money enough, without making himself a slave to the law; and when the early death of his parents put him in possession of thirty thousand pounds lawful money of Great Britain, besides the great draper's shop in the little town of Cranley where that money had been accumulated,—to say nothing of the stock and

good-will, and divers messuages and tenements, gardens and crofts, in and about the aforesaid town — Nat was most decidedly of the same opinion.

But, extravagant in every sense of the word, luxurious in his habits, prodigal in his generosity, expensive in his tastes, easy and uncalculating as a child, the thirty thousand pounds, between building and driving, and card-playing and good-fellowship—(for sporting he was too unwieldy and too idle, or that would undoubtedly have been added to the catalogue of the spendthrift's sins,) the thirty thousand pounds melted away like snow in the sunshine; the produce of the shop, gardens, crofts, messuages, and tenements—even the humble dwelling in which his father had been born, and his grandfather had laid the foundation of the family prosperity in the humble vocation of a tailor,—disappeared with equal rapidity; and Nat Kinlay was on the very verge of ruin, when the death of a rich uncle relieved him from his difficulties, and enabled him to recommence his career of dissipation.

In the course of a few years his funds were

again nearly exhausted, and again he was relieved by the bequest of a doting aunt, whom two of her brothers, indignant at the conduct of the hope of the house, had made their heiress; and the only lesson that her dutiful nephew drew from this second and near approach of poverty, was a vague confidence in his own good fortune, and that callousness to a particular danger which is the result of repeated escape from the same sort of peril. Good advice, which, of all valuable commodities, is the one most frequently wasted, was particularly thrown away in his case; he trusted in his lucky star—Napoleon himself not more implicitly—and replied to his friendly advisers only by a knowing wink, a good-humoured nod, and a scrap of some gay Anacreontic:

> "Pleased let us trifle life away,
> And think of care when we grow old,"

might have been his motto.

This faith in his peculiar good fortune was not diminished in his own eyes, or in those of his flatterers, when, just as Aunt Dorothy's tens of thousands were going where so many tens of thousands had gone before, Nat had the hap-

piness to secure the affections of a very amiable woman of considerable fortune, and far greater expectations, since she was the presumptive heiress of her mother's brother, with whom she had resided during the greater part of her life, and who was a man of ancient family and large landed property in the neighbourhood.

He, it is true, opposed the match as violently as a man well could do. His partialities and his prejudices were equally against such a connexion. His affection for his niece made him dread the misery which must follow a union with a confirmed spendthrift; and his own personal habits rendered him exceedingly averse to parting with one who had been for so many years his principal companion and friend. That a young woman educated by him in a stately retirement, immured amidst the splendid solitude of Cranley Park in the pursuits of art and of literature, should "abase her eyes" on a low-born and unlettered prodigal many years older than herself, without even the attraction of personal graces; that Elizabeth Chudleigh, the steadiest of the steady, the gravest of the grave, demure and pensive as a nun, should be

in love with Nat Kinlay,—seemed to her uncle not merely monstrous, but impossible.

Such, however, was the case. And, perhaps, many of the striking discrepancies that existed between them in character and situation tended to foster their mutual affection rather than to check its growth. To Nat, little accustomed to the best female society, the gentle reserve and quiet elegance of Elizabeth, accidentally thrown in his way at the house of a neighbouring gentleman, proved infinitely more captivating than the mere girlish prettiness, or the showy dashing vulgar style of beauty, with which he was familiar; whilst she ——Oh! have we not all seen some sage and sedate damsel of six-and-twenty—staid, demure, and coy, as the prude of Pope's and Cibber's days—carried off her feet by the mere charm of a buoyant, merry, light-hearted rattle, thoughtless, generous, and good-natured? Alas! the tale is common. And the want of good looks in the hero of the present story (though his head was good, and his figure at four or five-and-thirty was by no means so unsightly as it afterwards became,) was amply compensated by

manners so agreeable, and a kindness so real, that personal beauty seemed as nothing in the comparison. There was a spice of romance in the affair too, — a horse that had run away, or had been like to run away, and had been stopped by the courage and address of the gentleman; so poor Elizabeth said, and thought, that he had saved her life. Could she do less than devote that life to his happiness? And when he vowed that, with her for his companion and guide, he should never go astray again, could she do less than believe him?

Accordingly, the lady being of age, her parents dead, and her own fortune absolutely in her power, they were married, with no other drawback to her happiness than the total and solemn renunciation of the kind uncle who had been to her as a parent. Nat indeed, with his usual sanguine spirit, made sure of his relenting; but Elizabeth, better acquainted with the determined and somewhat stubborn temper which they had to encounter, felt a sad foreboding that the separation was final. She soon, however, forgot this evil in the bustle and excitement of the wedding excursion, and in the

total alteration of scene and of habits which ensued upon their settling down into a married life.

One of the few stipulations which his fair bride had made was, that Nat should change his residence and resume his profession. Accordingly, he bought the house and business of old John Grove, one of the most thriving practitioners that ever laid down the law in Belford, and soon became an eminent and popular denizen of the good town, where he passed his time much to his satisfaction, in furnishing and altering his already excellent house, throwing out bow-windows, sticking up verandas, adding to the coach-houses and stables, erecting a conservatory, and building a garden-wall. He took a pasture-farm about half-a-mile off, stocked it with cattle, built a fancy dairy, and bought a flock.

These were his graver extravagances, his business way of spending money. Society, or rather perhaps company in all varieties and degrees, formed his gayer mode of outlay. Parties at home and parties abroad, club-dinners and tavern-suppers,—meetings of all sorts

and degrees, so that they ended in cards and jollity, from the patrician reunions of the hunt, to which his good songs, and good stories, and good humour gained him admittance, down to the pigeon-shooting matches at the Rose and Crown, of which he was the idol,—wine and billiards, whist and punch,—divided his days and nights amongst them; and poor Elizabeth soon found how truly her uncle had prophesied when he had told her, that to marry Nat Kinlay was to give herself to present care and future penury. She did not cease to love him; perhaps she would have suffered less if she had. Selfish, utterly and basely selfish, as he was in pursuing his own ignoble pleasures at the expense of his wife's happiness, there was still that about him which it was impossible to dislike—a sweet and merry temper, a constant kindness of look and of word, and a never-failing attention to procure everything which he even fancied could give her pleasure; so that Elizabeth, who, conscientiously refraining from every sort of personal expense, took care never to express the desires which he would be so sure to have gratified, often

wondered how he could have divined her wishes and her tastes. No woman could dislike such a husband.

They had no child; but after they had been two or three years married, a beautiful little girl, about four years old, fair as alabaster, with shining ringlets of the texture and colour of undyed silk, made her appearance in Queen-street. They called her Hester; and Mrs. Kinlay said to those of her acquaintance whom she thought entitled to an explanation, that the child was an orphan whom Mr. Kinlay had permitted her to adopt. It was observed that, once when she made this declaration before him, the tears stood in his eyes, and he caught up the little girl in seeming play, and buried his face in her silky curls to conceal his emotion. One or two of his old Cranley friends remembered, too, a vague story concerning a pretty country girl in that neighbourhood. She had died—and some had said that she had died in childbed, about four years before; and her name had been Hetty. Be that as it might, the little Hester was firmly established in the house, the darling of the gay and jovial master,

and perhaps even more decidedly the comfort of his mild and pensive wife.

Time wore on; Hester was seven, eight, nine years old, and this, the fourth fortune that he had spent, began to wax low. Elizabeth's prudence had somewhat retarded the evil day, but poverty was fast approaching; and, with all his confidence in his own good fortune, and in her uncle's relenting, even Nat began to be conscious of his situation. Of the forgiveness of her rich relation, indeed, she well knew that there was no hope. Bad news seldom fails to reach those most interested; and she had heard from authority which she could not doubt, that the adoption of Hester had annihilated all chance of pardon. Severely strict in his own morals, the bringing home that motherless innocent seemed in his eyes a dereliction of feminine dignity, of wifely delicacy,—an encouragement of libertinism and vice, which nothing could induce him to tolerate. He was inexorable; and Elizabeth, determined not to abandon the helpless child, loved her the better for the injustice of which she was the object.

In herself, Hester was singularly interesting. Surrounded by comforts and luxuries, and the object of constant and affectionate attention from both Mr. and Mrs. Kinlay, there was about her a touch of thoughtfulness and of melancholy, a mild and gentle pensiveness, not a little striking in so young a girl. Nat, when at home, spent more than half his time in playing with and caressing her; but his jokes, usually so exhilarating, failed to enliven Hester: she smiled at them indeed, or rather she smiled at him with fond and innocent gratitude; but no one ever remembered to have heard her laugh; and to read, or rather devour, in the room which she was permitted to call hers, whatever books she could come by, or to wander in the extensive and highly-cultivated garden with a beautiful Italian greyhound belonging to Mrs. Kinlay, or to ramble with the same graceful companion through the picturesque fields of the Dairy Farm, formed the lonely child's dearest amusements. Whether this unusual sadness proceeded from her being so entirely without companions of her own age, or was caught unconsciously from Mrs. Kinlay's evident depression,

and from an intuitive perception, belonging to children of quick feeling, that beneath an outer show of gaiety all was not going well—or whether it were a mere accident of temperament, none could ascertain. Perhaps each of these causes might combine to form a manner most unusual at her age; a manner so tender, so gentle, so diffident, so full of pleading sweetness, that it added incalculably to the effect of her soft and delicate beauty. Her look seemed to implore at once for love and for pity; and hard must have been the heart that could resist such an appeal.

Every day increased Hester's sadness and Mrs. Kinlay's depression; but the reckless gaiety of the master of the house suffered no diminution. It had, however, changed its character. The buoyancy and light-heartedness had vanished; even the confidence in his inalienable good fortune was sensibly lessened — it was not, however, gone. No longer expecting a pardon from his wife's offended kinsman, and not yet hardened enough to wish, or at least to confess to himself in the face of his own conscience that he wished, for his death, he never—

thelessallowed himself (so do we cheat our own souls) to think that, if he should die, either without a will, or with a will drawn up in a relenting mood, all would again go right, and he be once more prosperous and happy; and, this train of ideas once admitted, he soon began to regard as a certainty the speedy death of a temperate and hale man of sixty, and the eventual softening of one of the most stern and stubborn hearts that ever beat in a human bosom. His own relations had forgiven him: — why should not his wife's? They had died just as the money was urgently wanted: — why should not he?

He was not, however, so thoroughly comfortable in this faith but that he followed the usual ways of a man going down in the world, spending more prodigally than ever to conceal the approach of poverty, and speculating deeply and madly in hopes of retrieving his broken fortunes. He played higher than ever, bought brood-mares and merino flocks, took shares in canals and joint-stock companies; and having in his prosperous days had the ill fortune to pick up at a country broker's a dirty, dingy land-

scape, which when cleaned turned out to be a Both, (ever since which unlucky moment he had fancied himself a connoisseur,) he filled his house with all the rubbish to be picked up in such receptacles of trash, whether in town or country,—Raphaels from Swallow-street, and Claudes from the Minories.

These measures had at least the effect of shortening the grievous misery of suspense without hope, the lingering agony of waiting for ruin. Almost as soon as poor Nat knew the fact himself—perhaps even before—his creditors discovered that he was penniless, and that his debts far exceeded his assets; a docket was struck, assignees appointed, the whole property given up, (for Mrs. Kinlay, in her imprudent and hasty marriage, had neglected the precaution of having even a part of her own money settled upon herself,) and the destitute family removed to London. Only a month before, Juliet, the graceful Italian greyhound, had died, and Hester had grieved (as older and wiser persons than Hester do grieve) over the loss of her pretty favourite; but now, as for the last time she paced mournfully those garden-

walks where Juliet had so often gambolled at her side, and sat for the last time on the soft turf under the great mulberry-tree where they had so often played together, she felt that Juliet, lying peacefully in her quiet grave amidst a bed of the pure and fragrant rose unique, had escaped a great evil, and that, if it pleased God, she could be content to die too.

Still more did that feeling grow upon her on their removal to a dark and paltry lodging in a dreary suburb of that metropolis where every rank and degree, from the most wretched penury to the most splendid affluence, finds its appropriate home. A wretched home was theirs;—small without comfort, noisy without cheerfulness, wanting even the charm of cleanliness or the solace of hope. Nat's spirits sank under the trial. Now, for the first time, he viewed before his eyes, he felt in his very heart's core, the miserable end of a life of pleasure; and, when he looked around him and saw the two beings whom he loved best on earth involved in the irremediable consequences of his extravagance; condemned, for his fault, to sordid drudgery and squalid want; punished, not

merely in his own self-indulgent and luxurious habits, but in his fondest and purest affections,—his mind and body gave way under the shock; he was seized with a dangerous illness, and, after lying for many weeks at the point of death, arose, weak as an infant, to suffer the pains and penalties of a premature old age, and that worst penalty of all—the will but not the power of exertion! Oh, if he could but have called back one year of wasted strength, of abused intellect! The wish was fruitless, in a worldly sense; but his excellent wife wept tears of joy and sorrow over the sincere though tardy expiation.

She had again written to her uncle, and had received a harsh and brief reply:—"Leave the husband who is unworthy of you, and the child—his child—whom his influence prevailed on you to adopt, and I consent to receive you to my heart and my dwelling; but, never whilst you cling with a fond preference to these degrading connexions—never, even if one should die, until you abandon both, will I assist you as a friend, or own you as a kinswoman."

Mrs. Kinlay felt this letter to be final, and

applied no more. Indeed, had she wished to address the obdurate writer, she knew not where to direct to him; for she ascertained from an old friend in the neighbourhood of Cranley that, a few weeks after the date of this letter, he left his beautiful residence, the seat of the family for many generations,—that the house was shut up, the servants discharged, and nothing known of the master beyond a vague report that he was gone abroad.

That hope over, they addressed themselves to the task of earning a humble living, and were fortunate enough to find an old friend, a solicitor of great practice and high character, who, although he had of late years shunned the prosperous prodigal, was most ready to assist the needy and repentant one. Nat, always quick, adroit, and neat-handed, had been in his youth a skilful engrosser; and Mr. Osborne, finding on trial that he could depend upon him, not only employed him in his office when his failing health allowed him to leave the house, but trusted him with deeds to take home, in the completion and sometimes the entire execution of which Mrs. Kinlay, applying herself to

master the difficulties of the art, proved a most able and willing assistant. Hester, too, helped them and waited on them to the extent of her little power; and, once plunged into the healthful tide of virtuous industry and active exertion, the impoverished family found their sufferings greatly diminished. Even poor Nat, after a hard day's scrivening, felt his mind lightened and his conscience soothed. But this was a solace that became more and more rare; the attacks of disease pressed on him with increasing frequency and added severity, and Mrs. Kinlay and Hester were the chief bread-winners of the family.

In the mean while, all their property at Belford had been disposed of,—plate, china, linen, the superb collection of greenhouse and hothouse plants, the trumpery pictures and the handsome furniture; and, persons not otherwise unfeeling, had committed the common but unfeeling act of crowding emulously to the sale, and talking quietly over the ruin of the acquaintance whom, not a month before, they had visited and liked,—for not to like Mrs. Kinlay, under all the disadvantage of low spirits, was

impossible. Even the dairy-house, with its pretty garniture of old china and Dutch tiles, was dismantled and sold off; a dividend was paid on the debts, and every trace of poor Nat was swept away from Belford; the house where he had resided, which had hung longest on hand, as being almost too expensive a residence for a town, having at last found a purchaser, who, if outward indications might be trusted, was as different as possible from its late jovial but unthrifty proprietor.

The new occupant, who took possession in the dusk of the evening and retired immediately to the back drawing-room, which had been fitted up for his reception, kept himself so close within his citadel, the garden and the apartments looking into it, (the shutters of the front windows not being even opened,) that the inhabitants of Queen-street, especially our friend Mrs. Colby, who lodged in one of a row of small houses nearly opposite, and kept a pretty keen look-out on her neighbours, particularly on a fresh arrival, began to think that they had been misinformed as to the sale of the house, and that a cross-looking old woman,

and a strong homely country girl who seemed to officiate under her as a drudge, and might be seen every morning upon her knees scrubbing the steps before the door, (those steps which no foot ever defiled!) were merely put in by the assignees to take care of the premises. Influenced by these suspicions, Mrs. Colby, who felt at once defrauded and affronted by not being able to answer the natural questions respecting her opposite neighbour, and not even knowing whether she had an opposite neighbour or not, took an opportunity one fine morning, when both the young and the old woman were at the door, the one at her usual scrubbery, the other taking in some butcher's meat, to inquire if their master were arrived. The poor lady took nothing by her motion; the Cinderella-looking maid was stupid, and cried Anan! the crone was surly, and banged the door in her face. No inquiry ever appeared more completely baffled; and yet Mrs. Colby had pretty nearly satisfied herself as to the ostensible object of her question, (*i. e.* whether the purchaser were arrived,) having caught a glimpse in the tray (our

friend Stephen Lane used to say that Mrs. Colby could see through a deal board) of some prime rump-steaks and a quarter of house-lamb, viands usually reserved for a master's table; and having also discerned, standing a little back in the passage, as if cogitating the question 'Shall I bark?' a beautiful Italian greyhound, so closely resembling the deceased Juliet, who had been of Mrs. Colby's acquaintance, that if such a thing as the ghost of a dog had been ever heard of, and that shrewd and unimaginative lady had been a believer in the unprofitable mysteries of the Gothic superstition, the light and graceful little animal might have passed for an apparition.

A week, nay a month passed away, and still Mrs. Colby, although keeping constant watch, had not been fortunate enough to see the stranger. It would almost seem that he had returned her compliment, and kept watch over her goings and comings likewise; for twice at least, as she had the mortification to hear, he had gone out during the short time that she had been off guard; once, as it appeared, to visit the nursery-garden, fresh stock the hothouses

and greenhouses, and hire suitable gardeners; the second time, to exchange his roomy and excellently situated pew in St. Stephen's church, (in the fitting up of which poor Nat had spent much money,) for a small niche in an obscure nook, which had no earthly recommendation but that of being close to a side-door at which the occupant might go out or come in without observation, and being so placed that it could be surmounted by a brass rod and a green curtain without causing annoyance or inconvenience to any one.

This last circumstance gave an insight into his character which every subsequent indication strengthened and confirmed. The man was evidently that plant of English growth called an oddity. He neither received nor returned visits, made no acquaintance, and seemed to have no associate in the world besides his cross housekeeper and his beautiful dog. Gradually he fell into the habit of going into the streets, and entering the shops to which business called him; and then it was seen that he was a tall, erect, elderly gentleman, muscular and well proportioned, with a fine intellectual head, bald on

the crown and forehead, and surrounded by short curly dark hair scarcely touched with grey, a firm intelligent countenance, and a general air of careless gentility — the air of one too sure of his station to take anything like trouble in its assertion.

After a time he began to haunt the bookseller's shops, and showed himself a man well acquainted not only with literature, but with bibliography,—a hunter after choice editions, and a dear lover of that perhaps not very extensive class of scarce works which are valuable for other qualities besides their scarcity. In the old English drama particularly, and old ballads and romances in all languages, he was curious; and his library would have formed as good a subject for a grand incremation, in the hands of the Curate and Barber, as that of Don Quixote himself, whom he also emulated in the liberality of his orders and his total regardlessness of expense.

Another of his haunts was the shop of an intelligent printseller in the town, whom he employed in burnishing the frames and assisting him to hang a small but splendid collection

of the finest Italian masters, — such pictures as it was sin and shame to shut up within doors more rigidly barred than those of a prison, inasmuch as none could find entrance; and such as collectors—who, even the most tasteful, often find the pleasure their pictures afford to their own eyes not a little enhanced by their value in the eyes of others — are generally ready enough to display.

From the report made by the printseller of these magnificent paintings, and of the richness and tastefulness of the furniture, together with his large orders and punctual payments amongst the different tradespeople of the town, a strong and probably exaggerated notion of the recluse's great wealth began to prevail amongst the genteel—that is to say, the idle circles of Belford, to whom, in the absence of individual occupation, anything in the shape of mystery and news proved a welcome resource from the sameness and *ennui* of their general condition. During six months that he had been in the place, nothing more had been known of him than that his newspapers came addressed to Oliver Carlton, Esq. Beyond that, not a tittle

of intelligence had Mrs. Colby been able to extract from the postman. He could not even tell her what the papers were; and she felt that it would somewhat have mitigated the fever of curiosity to know whether Mr. Carlton (if Carlton were indeed his name — if he were not rather some illustrious incognito,) amused his solitude by the perusal of the Times or the Chronicle, the Standard or the Courier. Then she could at least have guessed at his politics, have learnt to think of him as Whig or Tory. Now he was worse than the Veiled Prophet — the most provoking puzzle in existence!

This feeling was shared in no small degree by our friend King Harwood; for if curiosity ever were a female monopoly, (which, by the by, I have not the slightest intention of admitting,) that time has long since passed away, and this identical personage, Mr. King Harwood, was in himself a bright example of a man possessing as much inquisitiveness and impertinent curiosity as all the sex put together. He it was who proposed to Mrs. Colby to storm Mr. Carlton's castle severally, and see whether

their united powers of observation could not elicit some circumstance that might tend to elucidate the mystery; and, after some hesitation, Mrs. Colby consented; she being armed with the fair pretence of charity, as one of the lady collectors of a penny society; whilst King had provided himself with a letter from a young clergyman, who was standing for an evening lectureship at a public institution in London, and had requested Earl Harwood to canvass any of the governors with whom he chanced to be acquainted, enclosing a list in which appeared the name of Oliver Carlton.

Furnished with this document, our friend the beau approached, though with some caution, the grand object of his curiosity—the Bluebeard's chamber of Queen-street. The point of admission had been regarded by both parties as a question of considerable difficulty, "Not at home" being the regular answer to all visiters; and our adventurer had determined to watch Mr. Carlton home to dinner, and walk boldly after him into the house; a plan which was the more easily accomplished, as the milkman, happening to stop at the door at the same

instant, favoured the manœuvre, by engaging the attention of the stupid maid, who answered her master's knock. What passed between them, we have no business to know. Mr. Harwood would not tell, and Mr. Carlton did not; even Mrs. Colby's ingenuity could not extract more from the crest-fallen King, than that the interview had been short and decisive, (indeed, having been watching him from her window with Dr. Fenwick's stop-watch in her hand, she knew that the time which elapsed between his stealthy entrance and his rapid exit was exactly four minutes and forty-three seconds,) and that Mr. Carlton was a brute! Upon which encouragement, Mrs. Colby forthwith took up the Society's documents, and marched over the way herself—curious, perhaps, to know what sort of brute she might find him.

The lady was admitted without difficulty, and found herself, with a facility which she had not expected, and which put her a good deal out of her play, in the presence of Mr. Carlton, and compelled by his manner to plunge at once into the affairs of the charity. "A penny society!" exclaimed her host, with an

expression of sarcasm which only a long habit of scorn can give to any lips; "you come for a penny subscription! Madam, I have just had the honour of a visit from a gentleman, who is, he tells me, called King — King, doubtless, of the Busybodies! Do not compel me to tell a lady that she is well fitted to be their Queen."

And Mrs. Colby found it convenient to take up her papers and march off, as her luckless predecessor had done before her.

From this time Mr. Carlton continued inaccessible and unmolested, holding intercourse with none but the poor of the place, whom he relieved with great munificence and some caprice. He was evidently a man of fortune and education; of retired and studious habits, of very good principles, and very bad temper (soured probably by some domestic calamity, for it is our English way to quarrel with the whole world if injured by one individual); and as the Belford people got used to his oddities, and ceased to watch his comings and goings, and he, in his turn, came to regard the persons amongst whom he lived no more than the passing and unobservant crowds of London

or Paris—those mighty streams of human life, amongst which an isolated individual is but as a drop of water in a great river,—his dislike to being seen insensibly wore away, and he walked in and out of his house as freely and quietly as his neighbours.

It was now more than four years since the Kinlays had left Belford, and little had been heard of them during their absence. Poor Nat, who, at his height of popularity, had won only the undesirable distinction of being liked, but not esteemed even by the thoughtless, whilst by the sober-minded he was universally condemned, had been succeeded by another "good fellow" amongst the parties which he frequented, whose newer songs and fresher jokes had entirely effaced the memory of their old boon companion—such are the friendships of men of pleasure!—whilst his wife, though universally respected, had shrunk so completely from every sort of intimacy, that, amongst her many acquaintances, there was not one who lived with her upon more familiar terms than is implied by a polite interchange of visits. Well-wishers she had many, friends she had

none; and almost the first tidings that were heard of her in Belford during those three years were, that she had returned there a widow; that her husband had died after a tedious illness; and that she herself, in a state of failing health and utter poverty, had arrived in the town, accompanied only by Hester, had taken a small lodging nearly opposite her own old house, and intended to support herself by needlework.

Why she chose for her place of abode a spot so well calculated to revive melancholy recollections, can be accounted for only on the principle which none can understand, but all have felt, that endears to us the scene of past sufferings. This was undoubtedly her chief reason; although she sometimes said to herself, with desperate calmness, "This is my parish, and I will not give the overseers the trouble of removing me in case I am compelled to apply to them." Another cause for her fixing in Belford might be found in its being the residence of a favourite old servant, now a respectable mantua-maker in the town, who was likely to be useful to her in procuring employment, and to whom,

in case of her own death, she could entrust the child of her pity and her love — her own dear Hester.

Through this attached old servant,—why did I say that she had no friend in Belford?—it was soon made known to the ladies of the place that Mrs. Kinlay declined all visiting and all assistance, but would be thankful for employment at her needle, at the customary rate of payment; and she and Hester (her zealous and most efficient assistant) were soon in full occupation; any interval in the supply of plain-work (always so precarious) being supplied by dresses or millinery, to begin or to finish, from the shop of their humble but faithful friend Mrs. Boyd.

Hester, for whom Mrs. Kinlay felt that she had sacrificed much, and whom she loved all the better for that sacrifice, was a most sweet and gentle creature. Tall of her age—slender and graceful, though rather with a bending willowy grace—than the erect deportment of the dancing-school—with a profusion of curling hair darkened into the soft colour of the ripe hazel-nut, a skin fair and polished as that of

the garden-lily, a high open forehead, a mild grey eye, and a cheek pale until she spoke or smiled, and then glowing with the very tint of the maiden-blush-rose: all this—and, above all this, that smile so full of tenderness and sweetness, and that timid manner, and that low and pleading voice, were irresistibly charming. And her mind was as charming as her person. Wholly unaccomplished, since for accomplishments she had had no time, she had yet had the great and solid advantage of the society of a refined and cultivated woman, who talked to her, not as a child to be instructed, but as a companion, to whom she was pouring out the fullness of her own knowledge and information, and unlocking the stores of a memory rich, above all, in the highest poetry of our language. Even the drudgery of the quill, had had its use in Hester's education, first by forming her mind to habits of patient attention, and then by allowing her, when the mystery was conquered and the task of copying was become merely mechanical, long intervals for silent thought. So that, at little more than thirteen years of age, her reflective and somewhat imaginative

character had the maturity of twenty; those circumstances of her situation which would be commonly called disadvantages having acted upon her mind as the wind and rain of March upon the violet, strengthening the flower, and raising it into a richer tint and a more exceeding fragrance.

Her pleasure in returning to Belford,—"to the country," as she fondly called it—was excessive. Accustomed to fresh air and clear sunny light, the closeness and gloom of London had seemed to double the labour to which she had been condemned; and to inhabit again a street on the very outskirts of the town, in which three minutes' run would lead her through the by-lane she knew so well, into the beautiful meadows and pastures of the Dairy Farm, was a blessing for which she could never, she thought, be sufficiently grateful. A few "natural tears she shed" to the memory of her kind protector—her father, as she had been taught to call him; but for herself, and even for her dear mother (for "mother" was the fond name by which she had always been permitted to address Mrs. Kinlay), she was full of hope.

"The air would restore that dear mother's health, and *she* should be able to support them both—she was sure she should. Half an hour's run in the fields and lanes in the early morning, or in the dusk of twilight, and a long, long ramble every Sunday afternoon, would make her strong enough for any exertion; she wished her dear mother would let her work only for one week without helping her—she was sure she could keep them both." And as she said this, her sweet face gladdened and glowed with her earnestness, the sad expression vanished, and she looked as happy and as hopeful as she really felt.

Neither she nor Mrs. Kinlay had made any inquiry respecting their opposite neighbour, the occupier of the house where they had lived for so many years. Their landlady, a well-intentioned but very common person, was not of a class to tempt them into any communication on a subject so painful and so affecting; and Mrs. Boyd—who had lived with Mrs. Kinlay from childhood, had pressed her coming to Belford, and had engaged for her her present lodging, with a vague intimation that she

thought the situation would be beneficial, and hoped her dear mistress would not object to its vicinity to her former dwelling—had never entered on the subject. Ten days had passed without their happening to see their misanthropic neighbour, when one bright autumn morning, (for it was early in October that they arrived in Queen-street,) Hester sitting at work at the open window, her landlady and Mrs. Kinlay being both in the room, saw him issue from his own door followed by the beautiful Italian greyhound, and exclaimed at its resemblance to her own regretted pet, her faithful Juliet: "Never was such a likeness!" cried she; "look! dear mother! only look!"

"It's Mr. Carlton and his dog—Romeo, I think they call him," observed the landlady, advancing to the window.

"Romeo! how strange! my dog's name was Juliet," replied Hester. "Do, dearest mother, come and see how like this little dog is to her in all her pretty ways. See how he frisks round his master and jumps almost into his arms! Pray look!"

And turning round to demand still more

earnestly Mrs. Kinlay's attention, she saw her leaning back in her chair pale and motionless, the needlework on which she had been employed fallen from her hands, and her whole appearance and attitude bespeaking her inability to speak or move. She had not fainted, and yet she seemed scarcely conscious of the caresses of poor Hester, or of her efforts to revive and rouse her. Her first articulate words were a desire to see Mrs. Boyd; and by the time she arrived, Mrs. Kinlay was sufficiently collected to send the anxious girl for a walk, whilst she conversed in private with their humble but faithful friend.

The result of this consultation was a long letter written by Mrs. Kinlay and despatched to the post-office by Mrs. Boyd; and, until the reply arrived on the second morning, an evident increase of illness and agitation on the part of the writer.

This reply consisted of a large packet, apparently, as Hester thought from a transient glance which she was too delicate to repeat, of her dear mother's own letter returned with two or three lines in the envelope. Whatever

might be the contents, the effect was exquisitely painful. Inured as the unhappy lady had long been to suffering, this stroke seemed the most severe of any; and Hester could scarcely repress the affectionate anxiety which prompted her twenty times a day to implore that this new grief might be confided to her. Someway or other she could not avoid connecting it in her own mind with Romeo and his master; she even thought that the name of Carlton came across her as a sound once familiar; she could not recall when she had heard it, or where—the trace on her memory was faint and indistinct as the recollection of a dream—but assuredly the name was not new to her. Again and again was she on the point of making some inquiry either of Mrs. Kinlay or of Mrs. Boyd; but respect in the one instance and delicacy in the other—and, above all, the early and salutary habit of self-restraint—withheld her from touching on the subject. The only approach to it that she ventured was a remark on the singular coincidence of name in the two dogs: "Romeo and Juliet—surely it was strange!"

"Both are common names for Italian greyhounds," was Mrs. Kinlay's quiet reply; and nothing more passed between them.

In the mean while Christmas approached, and the invalid's health became more and more precarious; and their united labours (although liberally paid) became more and more inadequate to the additional expenses of winter and of sickness. Mrs. Kinlay, whose hoard of jewels and trinkets had been nearly exhausted by the long illness and the burial of her husband, now disposed even of her laces and linens, reserving nothing but mere necessaries for herself and Hester, and a small but beautiful and valuable repeater—the last gift, as she said, of a dear friend.

This resource and Hester's incessant labours kept them through the dark months; for the poor child found that November, and December, and January could be dark even out of London: and the winter passed away unmarked by any occurrence, except the formation of a warm and lasting friendship between herself and Romeo. One day, by some strange accident, the graceful little creature, shy and

timid as a fawn, had lost his master, missed him in some of the booksellers' and printsellers' shops that he frequented; and when, after a fruitless search, he addressed himself in distress and perplexity to the task of finding his way home, he encountered a tribe of noisy urchins, the pests of the streets, ripe for mischief, who seeing the poor little animal panting and breathless for fear, surrounded it shouting and hooting, hallooed their own curs upon it, chased it as if it had been a wild beast, and finally followed it up the street with the cry of "A mad dog!"

In this plight, Hester, going to the chemist's for medicine, met the worried and bewildered little creature, who on her calling "Romeo!" came to her at once, and sprang into her arms; and little as the slight gentle girl seemed calculated to encounter the small mob of mischievous boys already emulating the hero of Hogarth's Progress of Cruelty, and promising candidates for a similar catastrophe, yet, strong in womanly scorn and righteous indignation, she succeeded in rescuing her trembling protegé and kept his pursuers at bay until, still carry-

ing him in her arms, she took refuge with her frightened charge in a respectable shop. There she sat down with him in her lap, and soothed and caressed him until his fear seemed lost in love and gratitude to his fair preserver. Dogs are great physiognomists,—that is admitted on all hands; they are also voice-fanciers; and Romeo showed his discrimination in both these points, by being never weary of looking at his new friend's sweet face, or of listening to her melodious tones. They were obliged to part, for Hester felt it a point of duty to return him as speedily as might be to the master who seemed to love nothing else in the world, and accordingly she took him to the door before he had been even missed; but from that moment an attachment of the warmest kind was established between them. Romeo loved Hester as the most grateful of all animals loves those who have served him;* and Hester loved Romeo with that still stronger and more delightful affection which a young and generous girl feels for one whom she has served.

Under the guidance of this sentiment, it was

* Vide note at the end of the story.

quite extraordinary, considering how little either party went out, that they should so often contrive to meet each other. Romeo watched for Hester, and Hester watched for Romeo. It was an innocent romance, a rare instance of a clandestine intercourse without guilt or shame. Whether Mr. Carlton knew of their meetings, never appeared. Mrs. Kinlay did, and felt a pleasure which few things now could give her when Romeo bounded up stairs with Hester to pay her a visit. Frugal as they were, denying themselves all but necessaries, they could not resist the temptation of keeping a supply of the delicate biscuits which that choice and fragile race of dogs are known to prefer to any other food; and Romeo, however difficult to coax into eating at his own home, never refused the cates prepared for him by the fair hands of his new friends. It was a very singular and very genuine attachment.

The winter, although gloomy, had been mild; and even in the Christmas week Hester, who knew every dell where the starry primrose grew, and every hedge-row where the violet blossomed, had cheered the sick-room of Mrs.

Kinlay by a nosegay of primroses; whilst during the whole of February she had contrived to find on southern banks, and in nooks sheltered from almost every wind, covered by withered grass or couching amongst short mossy turf, a few, and a very few, early violets; —for those sweet flowers know and obey their season, and although an occasional straggler, tempted by the mildness of the weather, may steal into day, yet the countless multitude, the mass of fragrant blossoms (unlike the primrose, which, provided not checked by frost, will cover the ground in mid-winter,) reserves its simple beauty and its exquisite perfume for its own month of March. And now March had arrived—a March soft and genial as April; and Mrs. Kinlay appearing much revived by the beauty of the weather and the fresh impulse given to all nature by the breath of Spring, Hester was most anxious to win her into walking with her one fine Sunday as far as the pastures of the Dairy Farm, now let to an old milkman, who, churlish to all the world, but courteous to Hester, had extended to her, and to her alone, the privilege of gathering violets

in his hedge-rows. The first day that she had attempted to revisit her old haunts, she had found the high-boarded gate which separated the street from the lane—a bye lane running along the side of Mr. Carlton's premises, then winding between a double row of tall elms, and opening into the rich enclosures of the Dairy Farm—she had found the gate triply locked, and had been seen peeping wistfully through the barrier by Giles Cousins, the milkman aforesaid—who had, and not without having fairly earned the title, the reputation of being the veriest churl in Belford—in, as it seemed, the least auspicious moment that could have been chosen for such an encounter, inasmuch as he was in the very act of driving before him a small rabble of riotous boys whom he had caught breaking his fences in search of a gleaning of hazel-nuts. The young imps (some of that same band of ne'er-do-well urchins who subsequently signalized themselves in the attack on poor Romeo) resisted amain, screaming, and shouting, and struggling in all manner of ways; but Giles Cousins, armed with the long and powerful whip with which he was accus-

tomed to gather together a tribe of unruly cows, was too many for the gentlemen. He drove them to the gate, unlocked it, and thrust them forth into the street. Hester was meekly turning away; but the same strong hand that had thrust the rioters out so roughly, kindly seized the gentle girl, and drew her in!

"Miss Hester! to be sure it *is* Miss Hester! and how she is grown! Don't you go, Miss; pray don't you go. You have a right, sure, to come here whenever you choose; and so has madam—I heard she was come to Belford; and I'll send you a key, to let yourself in as often as you like. The cows are as quiet as quiet can be; and my dame will be glad to see you at the cottage—main glad she'll be. It looks quite natural to see you here again."

"Poor thing!" thought he within himself, as he turned away from Hester's tearful thanks; "poor thing! she must have known hard usage up in London, if a kind word makes her cry. And such a pretty harmless creature as it is! just as harmless-looking as when it was no higher than that dock," (beginning to tug away at the strong-rooted weed) "which

Jack Timms ought to be ashamed of himself for not having pulled up, passing it as he does every day, night and morning, and being told of it six times a week into the bargain. Poor Miss Hester!" continued Giles, having by a manful haul succeeded in eradicating his tough and obstinate enemy, and letting his thoughts flow again into their kindly channel—"poor Miss Hester! I must get my mistress to send her a pat of butter now and then, and a few apples from the old orchard; and we must manage to get her and madam to take a drop of milk night and morning. We shall never miss it; and if we did miss it, it's no more than we ought to do. I shall never forget how main kind poor madam was to my mistress and me when we lost our little Sally. To my mind, Miss Hester favours Sally—only she's more delicate, like. We must send her the key and the apples, and manage about the milk."

And, with a downright heartiness and honesty of kindness that Mrs. Kinlay could not resist, the affair of the milk, so great a comfort to an invalid, was managed; and Mrs.

Cousins being quite as grateful as her husband, and entertaining the same fancy of Hester's resemblance to the child whom they had lost—the youngest and the favourite,—she had run to the Dairy-house to see them as often as she could; though, so closely was she occupied, that this her brief half-hour's holiday occurred far too rarely for their wishes. Her last visit had been on that Sunday morning, when—in walking up the little path, that led from the gate to the house, between two borders thickly set with bunches of anemones of the rich red and purple, as vivid as those colours in old stained glass, the secret of producing which is said to be lost now-a-days, (luckily Nature never loses *her* secrets,) alternating with tufts of double primroses, and of the pretty plant called by the country people the milk-blossom, backed first by a row of stocks and wall-flowers, and then by a taller range of gooseberry and currant bushes just stealing into leaf—and, finally, in arriving at the rustic porch where the sweet-briar was putting forth its first fragrant breath drawn out by the bright sunshine succeeding to a balmy shower,—Hester

had felt in its fullest force the sweet influence of the sweetest of the seasons, and had determined, if possible, to persuade Mrs. Kinlay into partaking her enjoyment, so far at least as her strength would permit, by getting, if not to the dwelling itself, at least into some of the nearest meadows of the Dairy Farm.

At the outset of the walk, Hester found with delight that her experiment had succeeded beyond her expectation. The day was delicious—bright, sunny, breezy,—for the light and pleasant air, though still on the wintry side of the vernal equinox, was too mild and balmy to deserve the name of wind,—and her dear companion seemed to feel in its fullest extent the delightful exhilaration so finely described by Gray, who, of all the poets of his own somewhat artificial time, has best succeeded in bringing strikingly and vividly before us the commonest and most familiar feelings of our nature:

> "See the wretch that long has tost
> On the thorny bed of pain
> At length repair his vigour lost,
> And breathe and walk again;

> The meanest floweret of the vale,
> The simplest note that swells the gale,
> The common sun, the air, the skies,
> To him are opening paradise."
>
> *Unfinished Ode on the Pleasures arising from Vicissitude.*—MASON'S *Life of Gray.*

The season and the scenery were alike in harmony with the buoyant sensations of returning health. The glorious sun was careering in the deep blue sky, dappled by a thousand fleecy clouds which floated at a distance around the bright luminary without, for a moment dimming his effulgence: the sunbeams glanced between the tall trees on the grassy margent of the lane, striking on the shining garlands of the holly and ivy with a sparkling radiance; glittering through the dark leaves of the bramble, as though each particular leaf were a pendant emerald; dwelling with a purplish flush on the young shoots of the woodbine; and illumining the tender green of the wintry mosses, and the pure hues of the pale primrose and the crimson-tipped daisy, with a mingled brilliancy and delicacy to which the most glowing colouring of Rubens or of Titian would be faint, dim, and spiritless. A

slender brooklet danced sparkling by the roadside; young lambs were bleating in the meadows; the song-thrush and the blackbird were whistling in the hedgerows; the skylark was chaunting overhead; and the whole scene, animate and inanimate, accorded with Mrs. Kinlay's profound and devout feeling of thankfulness to the Providence which, depriving her of artificial luxuries, had yet restored her to the enjoyment of the commonest but purest gifts bestowed on man—the ever-varying and never-cloying beauties of Nature.

She walked on in silence; beguiled, partly by the real charm of the scene and the hour—the shallow pool on the top of which the long grass went trailing—the vigorous and life-like look of the leafless elm, into which one might almost see the sap mounting—the long transparent sprays of the willow, seen between the eye and the sunbeams like rods of ruddy light—the stamped leaves of the budded cowslip—the long wreaths of ground-ivy mingling its brown foliage and purple flowers with the vivid reds and pinks of the wild geranium, and the snowy strawberry blossom lurking in the

southern hedge; and partly by thoughts sweet yet mournful—the sweeter perhaps because mournful of friends who had trodden with her that very path in by-gone years, of all that she had felt and all that she had suffered in those quiet scenes;—when, after passing a bit of neglected wild plantation, where the tender green of the young larch contrasted with the dark and dusky hue of the Scotch fir, and the brown sheaths of the horse-chestnut just bursting into leaf; where the yellow flowers of the feathery broom mingled with the deeper gold of the richly-scented furze, and the earth was carpeted with primroses springing amidst layers of dropped fir-cones;—after passing this wild yet picturesque bit of scenery, which brought still more fully to recollection the faulty but kindly person by whom the little wood had been planned, she became suddenly exhausted, and was glad to sit down to rest on the trunk of a large beech newly cut by the side of the lane, whilst Hester passed into an adjacent field to fill her basket with the violets, whose exquisite odour, drawn out by the sun, penetrated through the hedge and perfumed

the sheltered retreat which she had chosen. She sank into her lowly seat with a placid smile, and dismissed her young and affectionate companion to her pleasant labour, with a charge not to hurry—to ramble where she liked, and enjoy the beauty of the flowers, and the summer-like feeling of the light and fragrant air.

And Hester, as she bounded like a fawn into those sunny meadows, abandoned herself to a fulness of enjoyment such as for many years the poor child, surrounded by distress and difficulty, and thoughtful far beyond her years, had not experienced. Every sense was gratified. The sunshine, the flowers, the hum of insects, the song of birds, the delicious breath of spring, and, more than all, that feeling—to her so rare, the unwonted sense of liberty! Well sings the old Scottish poet—

> "Ah! freedom is a noble thing!
> Freedom makes man to have liking!
> Freedom all solace to man gives;
> He lives at ease that freely lives."
>
> BARBER—*The Bruce.*

And Hester tripped along the meadow as light as the yellow butterfly brought into life

by that warm sunshine, and as busy as the bee wandering from blossom to blossom. It was a lawn-like series of old pastures, divided by deep ditches, fringed by two or three of the wild irregular plantations, edged by shaggy bits of mossy paling, which I have attempted to describe; and dotted about by little islands of fine timber trees and coppice-like underwood, the reliques of hedgerows now long cut down, breaking and almost concealing the massy buildings, the towers, and spires of the town. One short bank, crowned by high elms, projected a little way into the pastures like some woody headland, at right angles from the hedge under which she was walking; the hedge being thickly set with white violets, those "pretty daughters of the earth and sun," whilst, all around the lofty elms, the very ground was coloured by the deep purple which forms, perhaps, the sweetest variety of that sweetest of plants. In the hedgerow, too, were primroses yellow and lilac and white, all the tints commonly known blossoming under the pearly buds of the blackthorn, those "locked buttons on the gemmed trees;" and Hester, as she stooped to fill her basket, first

mused gravely on a problem which has posed wiser heads than hers,—the mystery, still unexplained, of the colouring of flowers—and then, with a natural transition, applied herself to recollecting the different epithets given to these blossoms of spring by the greatest of poets; for Hester loved poetry with an intensity which might be said to have partly formed her character, and to hear Mrs. Kinlay read Shakspeare, or recite some of the stirring lyrics of his contemporaries, had been the chief solace of her monotonous labours.

"Pale primrose!" said Hester to herself,—"upon faint primrose beds"—"violets dim"—"the nodding violet"—What pictures! and how often he returns to them, so beautifully, and so fondly! surely he must have loved them! And he speaks of the robin-redbreast, too!" added she, as, startled by her gentle movements, the hen-bird flew from her careless mossy nest in a stump of hawthorn, exhibiting her five pale eggs with red spots, to one who would not have harmed them for the fee-simple of Belford. She passed on rapidly, yet cautiously, that the frightened bird might the sooner

return to her charge; and arriving under the clump of elms, was amused by another set of nest-builders, those pugnacious birds the rooks, who had a colony overhead, and were fighting for each other's clumsy stick-mansions as if they had been the cleverest architects that ever wore feathers. The sight of these black gentlefolks made a change in the current of Hester's poetical recollections, and she began "crooning" over to herself the elegant and pathetic ballad of "The Three Ravens," one of those simple and tender effusions which have floated down the stream of time, leaving the author still unguessed. Then, by some unperceived link of association, her mind drifted to another anonymous ditty of a still earlier age, the true and pleasant satire called "Sir Penny;" and when she had done with "that little round knave," she by an easy transition began reciting the fine poem entitled "The Soul's Errand," and attributed to Sir Walter Raleigh; and had just arrived at the stanza—

"Tell fortune of her blindness,
Tell nature of decay,
Tell friendship of unkindness,
Tell justice of delay;

And if they will reply,
Then give them all the lie;"

when she was aware of footsteps passing along the adjoining lane, and little Romeo, creeping through the thick hedge, flung himself into her arms.

During her poetical quotations she had gathered even to satiety from the purple bank, and had returned to the hedgerow near the gate for the purpose of collecting the white violets which grew there in profusion; so that she was now nearly opposite the point where she had left Mrs. Kinlay, and was the unintentional auditress of a conversation which cleared at once the mystery that had hitherto hung over Mr. Carlton.

The first sentence that she heard rooted Hester to the spot. He seemed to have passed, or to have intended passing, and to have returned on some unexplained but uncontrollable impulse. His voice was at first low and calm—studiously calm, though not unkind, but became impassioned as he proceeded:

"Elizabeth! No, do not rise! Sit down

again, I entreat you. You are not well enough to stand. You must have been very ill."

"I have been very ill."

"Ay, you are greatly altered. We are both greatly altered. You have suffered much?"

"Oh, very much!"

"Yes! we have both suffered! I am no man for general acquaintance, or for the slight and trivial companionship which this selfish, bustling world dignifies with the name of friendship. I lived, as you know, in my books, and in the one solitary tie which still connected me with the world. Fatherless and motherless, the only child of my only sister, you were to me, Elizabeth, as my own daughter—endeared to me by the cares of twenty years, by habit, by kindred, and by taste. And when you, whom I loved as a daughter, whom I trusted as a friend,—when you abandoned me for one so unworthy——"

"He is dead. I beseech you, spare his memory! He was kind to me—I loved him! For my sake, for your own, spare his memory!—You would not wish to see me die here before your eyes!"

"When for *him*, then—being such as he was—you deserted me, it seemed as if the earth were sinking under my feet, as if the sun were extinguished in the heavens; books ceased to interest me—my food did not nourish, my sleep did not refresh me—my blood was turned to gall; I vowed never to see, to pardon, or to succour you, (for well I knew that you would soon want succour,) whilst you remained with him, and acted under his guidance; and heart-sick and miserable, I left the home in which we had been so happy, to wander over the world in search of the peace and oblivion which I failed to find: and then, under some strange and moody influence, I settled here, in the spot that I should most have avoided, to feed my spirit full with bitter recollections. Elizabeth, those tears and sobs seem to respond to my feelings. They seem to say, that on your part also the old and holy love of near kindred and long association is not quite forgotten?"

"Oh, never! never!"

"Why not then accede to my condition—my single condition, and return with me to the beautiful and deserted home of our com-

mon ancestors, its heiress and its mistress? Come with me, my dearest niece, and be, as you once were, my companion, my almoner, my friend! Come with me, as the comfort and solace of my old age, and find health and happiness in the abode of your youth! Why should you hesitate?"

"I do not hesitate."

"It is but to dismiss *his* daughter—the illegitimate offspring of a low and licentious passion—one whom it was an insult to bring into contact with his pure and chaste wife!"

"One who is herself all that is pure and innocent, and gentle and good! I do not defend my own conduct. In abandoning you, my more than father, I deserved all punishment. Grievously as I have suffered, I have felt the chastisement to be merited. But if I were to desert this orphan child — *his* orphan — the grateful, tender child who has shared all my sorrows, has nursed me in sickness, has worked for me in health; if I were for any worldly good—even for that best of all blessings, your affection—to cast her friendless and helpless upon the world,—I should never know another quiet

moment—I should sink under grief and remorse! What would become of her, growing as she is into such elegant, such exquisite beauty, and with a mind pure, graceful, and delicate as her person? What would be her fate? Her mother has long been dead. She has no kindred, no natural friend—none but myself, poor, feeble, helpless, sick, and dying as I am; but, while I live, I will never abandon her—never! never! It breaks my heart to part now from you. But I cannot desert my Hester; as you have felt for me, so do I feel for her. Do not ask me to abandon the child of my love!"

"I ask nothing. I offer you the choice between her and me. I am rich, Elizabeth; my large estates have accumulated, during my long absence, until I can hardly count my own riches; and you are poor—grievously poor—think before you decide."

"I have decided. Poor I am—grievously poor;—but in giving up your affection, I resign more than riches. I have decided—I have chosen—I do not hesitate. But say, Good b'ye! Bid God bless me! Do not leave

me in unkindness. Speak to me before you go, or you will break my heart. Speak to me, if only one word!"

"Farewell, Elizabeth! May you be happier than I shall be!"

"Oh, God bless you! God for ever bless you, my best and earliest friend!"

And then Hester heard Mr. Carlton move slowly away—she felt rather than heard that he turned away; and Mrs. Kinlay remained weeping bitterly. Hester was glad to hear her sobs. She herself could not cry. Something rose in her throat, and she felt as if it would suffocate her—but she could not cry. She lay upon the ground lost in thought, with her little basket by her side, and Romeo still in her arms, until he sprang from her at his master's call, oversetting her violets in his haste: and then she roused herself, and rose from the bank on which she had been lying, picked up her scattered flowers, and walked with a strange calmness to the other end of the field, that, if Mrs. Kinlay should seek her, she might not be led to suspect that she had overheard the conversation. And by the time Mrs. Kinlay did join

her, each was sufficiently composed to conceal her misery from the other.

On the Friday of the ensuing week, a low and timid knock was heard just before sunset at the house of Mr. Carlton; and on opening the door, the housekeeper was at once astonished and perplexed to discover Hester, who inquired gently and firmly if she could see her master; and who, on his passing accidentally through the hall, settled the question herself, by advancing with a mixture of decision and modesty, and requesting to speak with him. Perplexed even more than his wondering housekeeper, he yet found it impossible to repulse the innocent child; and leading the way into the nearest room, he sat down on the first chair, and motioned for her to be seated also.

It happened that this room was the one in which Mrs. Kinlay had principally lived, and where Hester had passed the happiest days of her childhood. The windows opened on the pretty velvet lawn on which stood the great mulberry tree; and her own particular garden, the flower-bed that was called hers, and sowed and planted by her own hands under Mrs.

Kinlay's direction, was right before her, glowing with the golden jonquil, and the crisp curled hyacinth—the choicest flowers of the season. There too, on that short soft turf where she had so often played with her own fond and faithful dog, lay the equally fond and faithful Romeo, basking in the last rays of the setting sun. The full tide of sad and tender recollection gushed upon her heart; the firmness which she had summoned for the occasion deserted her, her lip quivered, and she burst into tears.

Stern and misanthropic though he were, Mr. Carlton was not only a man, but a gentleman, by birth, education, and habit; and could not see female tears, especially in his own house, and caused, as he could not but suspect, by himself, without feeling more discomposed than he would have cared to acknowledge. He called immediately for water, for wine, for reviving essences, and himself administered a plentiful aspersion of *eau de Cologne*, and loosened the strings of her cottage bonnet.

Whilst so engaged; he could not help dwelling on her exquisite and delicate beauty. "How like a lily!" was the thought that

passed through his mind as he gazed on the fair broad forehead, with its profusion of pale brown ringlets hanging down on either side; the soft dovelike eyes, the pencilled brows, and the long lashes from which the tears dropped on the polished cheeks; the fine carving of the youthful features, the classical grace of the swan-like neck, the pliant grace of the slender figure, the elegant moulding of those trembling hands with their long ivory fingers; and, above all, the mixture of sweetness and intelligence, of gentleness and purity, by which, even in her present desolation, the orphan girl was so eminently distinguished. She still wore mourning for Mr. Kinlay; and the colour of her dress, though of the simplest form and the commonest material, added to the resplendent fairness of her complexion:—"How like a lily! how elegant! how ladylike! how pure!" was the thought that clung to Mr. Carlton; and when, recovering her calmness by a strong effort, Hester raised her eyes to the person whom she feared most in the world, she met his fixed on her with a look of kindness which she did not think those stern features could have worn.

Her first words banished the unwonted softness, and recalled all the haughtiness of his common expression.

"I beg you to forgive me, sir, for having been so foolish as to cry and to occasion you this trouble. But I could not help it. This room brought to my mind so many past scenes of joy and sorrow, and so many friends that I shall never see again—dear, dear Mrs. Kinlay! —and my poor father! it seems but yesterday that he was sitting by the fireside just where you do now, with me upon his knee, talking so gaily and so kindly! And to think that he is dead, and how he died!"—And Hester turned away and wept without restraint.

She was aroused from her grief by the stern interrogatory of Mr. Carlton: "I understood that you desired to speak to me?"

"I did so, sir," was the reply; "but this strange foolishness!"—and for a moment Hester paused. She resumed, however, almost instantly; her sweet voice at first a little faltering, but acquiring strength as she proceeded in her story, which Mr. Carlton heard in attentive silence.

"I did take the liberty of asking to speak with you, sir, that I might confess to you, what perhaps you may think wrong, that being within hearing last Sunday of your conversation with Mrs. Kinlay, I remained an undetected listener to that which was certainly not meant by either party for my knowledge. I was on the other side of the hedge accidentally gathering violets; and I suppose—I dare say—that I ought to have come into the lane. But I could not move; I was as if spell-bound to the place. What you said, and what she said explained to me things that had puzzled me all my life long. Though taught to call him father,—and a kind father he was to me!—and her mother—such a mother as never poor girl was blest with!—I yet knew, I cannot tell how, that I was not their rightful child; I used to think that I was some poor orphan—such as indeed I am!—whom their kindness had adopted. But that which I really was, I never suspected,—far less that I had been the means of separating my benefactress from such a kinsman—such a friend! When I heard *that*, and remembered all her goodness and all

her sufferings, I thought my very heart would have broken! She did not say a word to me, nor I to her. She does not know that I overheard the conversation; but all the evening she was so sad, and so ill—so very, very ill! Oh, if you could but have seen her pale face and have heard how she sighed! I could not bear it; so as soon as it was light I slipped out of the house, and ran up to the Dairy Farm to consult Giles Cousins and his dame, who have been very kind to me, and who would, I know, prevent my acting wrongly when I most wished to do right, as a young girl without the advice of her elders might do. They both agreed with me, that it was my plain duty to remove the cause of discord between two such near and dear relations by going to service; and happily, providentially, Mrs. Cousins's sister, who is cook in a clergyman's family, had written to her to look out for some young person to wait on her mistress's two little girls, walk out with them, and teach them to read and spell. Mrs. Cousins wrote immediately, and all is settled. Her husband—oh, how kind they have been!—her good generous

husband has advanced the money wanting for the journey and some needful trifles, and won't hear of my paying him out of my wages:—but God will reward him!" pursued poor Hester, again bursting into grateful tears: "God only can reward such goodness! He is even going with me to the very house. I sleep to-night at the Dairy Farm, and we set off to-morrow morning;—Mrs. Kinlay, who knows nothing of my intentions, imagining only that I am going to assist Mrs. Cousins in some needlework. Oh, what a thing it was to see her for the last time, and not to dare to say Farewell! or to ask her to bless me; or to pray for her on my bended knees, and bid God bless her for her goodness to the poor orphan. What a thing to part from such a friend for ever as if we were to meet to-morrow! But it is right, I am sure that it is right—my own internal feeling tells me so. And you must go to her before she misses me, and bring her home to your house; and in the full happiness of such a reconciliation, smaller sorrows will be lost. And you must tell her that I shall be very comfortable, very safe, for I am going to good people, with

whom it will be my own fault if I do wrong; and that in knowing her to be happy, I shall find happiness. Will you condescend, sir, to tell her this? and to pardon me for this intrusion? I could not steal away like a thief—I could not write, for I tried; and besides, there was only you that could comfort Mrs. Kinlay for the loss of one to whom she has been as kind as if she were her born daughter. Oh, sir, tell her, I beseech you, that the poor Hester is not ungrateful! If I leave her, it is from the truest and strongest affection," said poor Hester, unconsciously clasping her fair hands. "It is," added she, taking up a volume which lay open on the table, and which even in her emotion and excitement had caught the eye of the verse-loving girl—"It is on the principle of these beautiful lines:

> 'I could not love thee, dear, so well,
> Loved I not honour more!'

Tell her this, I entreat of you! Tell her—"

"I shall not tell her a word of this, Hester," interrupted Mr. Carlton, taking her hand and drawing her kindly towards him,—"not a single word! But you must tell me one thing,

must answer me one question:—You that seem to have a taste for the rough and the crabbed —a talent for softening the veriest churls,— do you think now in your little heart that you can ever like me half as well as Giles Cousins?"

"Oh, sir!" ejaculated Hester hopefully, yet doubtingly.

"Can you forgive me?" added Mr. Carlton more seriously; "can you pardon the foolish and wicked prejudice for which I can never forgive myself? I believe that you can, and that you will: and instead of setting off to this place of yours to-morrow morning, we must send your good friend Giles to make your excuses; and you must make my peace with Elizabeth, and we must all go together to Cranley Park. And here is Romeo knocking to be let in, and jumping and skipping as if he were conscious that his best friend was come home. I must give you Romeo, Hester; for he has given you the best part of him, that loving heart of his, long ago. And now, my dear little faithful girl, we must go to poor Elizabeth. To think of her having taught

you to love the poetry of Richard Lovelace!"

Six weeks after this interview, Hester and Romeo, two of the happiest creatures in existence, were tripping gaily along a pathway which led from the fine mansion of Cranley Hall to a beautiful cottage at the edge of the picturesque and neatly-wooded park. It was the day famous for the ancient sports and customs of England — the lovely May-day; and the green earth and brilliant sky, the light air and the bright sunshine, were such as to realize the most enchanting descriptions of the old poets. The young grass was studded with cowslips, and cuckoo-flowers, and the enamelled wild hyacinth; and the thickets no less richly set with the fragile wood-anemone, the elegant wood-sorrel, the brightly-coloured wood-vetch, and the fragrant wood-roof. The bright green beeches with their grey and shining bark, and the rich brown foliage and rugged trunks of the oaks, set off the old magnificent thorns, whose long garlands of pearly blossoms scented the very air; huge horse-chestnuts, with their pyramidal flowers, were dispersed amongst the

chase-like woodlands; and two or three wild cherries, of the size and growth of forest-trees, flung their snowy blossoms across the deep blue sky. A magnificent piece of water, almost a lake, reflected the beautiful scenery by which it was surrounded, — the shores broken into woody capes and lawny bays, in which the dappled deer lay basking, listening, as it seemed, to the concert of nightingales, whose clear melody filled the air.

All spoke of affluence, of taste, of innocent enjoyment. To breathe that fragrant air, to gaze on that lovely landscape, was to Hester unmingled happiness. She bounded on gay as the pretty favourite who frolicked around her, her sweet face radiant with pleasure, and her melodious voice bursting into spontaneous quotations of the thousand exquisite verses which the spring-loving poets, from Chaucer to Milton, have consecrated to the merry month of May.

One chaunt of the season particularly haunted her, and *would* not go out of her head, although she repeated it over and over purely to get rid of it,—the charming little poem from

"The Paradise of Dainty Devices," of which this is the burthen:—

"When May is gone, of all the year
The pleasant time is past."

Now it was with this burthen that Hester quarrelled.

"When May is gone, of all the year
The pleasant time is past,"

quoth Hester.—"But that is a story, is it not, Romeo?" added she: "at least, I am sure it cannot be true at Cranley; for June will have roses and lilies, and strawberries, and hay-making," continued Hester. And then relapsing into her ditty,

"May makes the cheerful hue—"

"I won't think of that pretty story-telling song,—shall I, Romeo? June will have roses and lilies; July will have jessamine and myrtle," said Hester. And then again the strain came across her—

"May pricketh tender hearts,
Their warbling notes to tune.
Full strange it is——"

"There is nothing so strange as the way in which these lines haunt me," pursued poor Hester:—

"When May is gone, of all the year
The pleasant time is past."

"One would think," added she to herself, "that I was spell-bound, to go on repeating these verses, which, pretty as they are, have no truth in them; for at Cranley all times and all seasons, spring, summer, autumn, winter, must be pleasant. Oh, what a sweet place it is! and what happiness to live here with dear, dear Mrs. Kinlay, and dear Mr. Carlton! and to see her so well and cheerful, and him so considerate and kind! — so very kind! Oh, how can I ever be sufficiently thankful for such blessings!" thought Hester to herself, pausing and clasping her hands, while the tears ran gently down her fair cheeks in the energy of her tender gratitude; and the May-day verses were effectually banished from her mind by the stronger impulse of affectionate feeling. "How can I ever be half thankful enough, or take half enough pains to please one who seems to have no wish so much at heart as that of pleasing me? Oh, how happy I am! — how thankful I ought to be!" thought Hester, again walking on towards the beautiful rustic build-

ing which she had now nearly reached; "the slightest wish cannot pass through my mind, but somehow or other Mr. Carlton finds it out, and it turns into reality—as if I had the slaves of the lamp at command, like Aladdin! This Dairy-house, now! I did but say how much I liked the old one at Belford, and here is one a thousand times prettier than that! But I shall not like this better, beautiful as it is,—no! nor so well," thought the grateful girl; "for here will be no Giles Cousins with his good wife to welcome me as they used to do there, and contrive a hundred ways to cheat me into taking the gifts they could ill spare themselves. Dear Giles Cousins!—he, that was called so crabbed, and who was so generous, so delicate, so kind!—Dear, dear Giles Cousins! how glad he would be to see me so happy! I wonder what I can send him, dear old Giles! Oh, how I should like to see him!"

This train of thought had brought Hester to the rustic porch of the Dairy-house, which was, as she had said, an enlarged and improved copy of that at Belford, constructed with the magical

speed which wealth (the true lamp of Aladdin) can command, to gratify a fancy which she had expressed on her first arrival at Cranley Park. Filled with grateful recollections of her good old friend, Hester reached the porch, and looking up to admire the excellent taste displayed in its construction, she saw before her—could she believe her eyes?—the very person of whom she had been thinking, Giles Cousins himself, with a smile of satisfaction softening his rugged countenance, his good wife peeping over his shoulder, and Mr. Carlton and Mrs. Kinlay in the back-ground, delighted witnesses of the joyful meeting. He clasped her in his arms, and kissed her as he would have kissed the daughter whom he fancied she resembled; and then, seized with a sudden recollection of the difference of station, he begged pardon, and let her go.

"Oh, Master Cousins!" cried Hester, still retaining his hard rough fist, and pressing it between her delicate hands; "dear Master Cousins! how very, very glad I am to see you and your good dame! It was the only wish I had

in the world. Oh, I shall be too happy! And you are come to stay?—I know you are come to stay!"

"To be sure I be, miss," responded honest Giles: "come to stay till you be tired of me; —come for good."

"Oh, it is too much happiness!" exclaimed Hester. "How strange it is, that as soon as a wish passes through my mind, Mr. Carlton sees it and makes it come to pass. Oh, I shall be too happy!" cried poor Hester, the tears chasing each other over cheeks glowing like maiden-roses; "I shall be too happy! and I never can be thankful enough! Was ever any one half so happy before?—did ever any one deserve such happiness?" exclaimed Hester, as, her tears flowing faster and faster, she flung herself into Mr. Carlton's arms.

Note.—That that beautiful race of dogs—the Italian greyhound, is susceptible of a personal partiality distinct from the common attachment of a dog to its master—a preference that may almost be called friendship, I have had a very

pleasant and convincing proof in my own person. Several years ago I passed some weeks with a highly-valued friend, the wife of an eminent artist, in one of the large, old-fashioned houses in Newman-street — a house so much too large for their small family, that a part of it was let to another, and a very interesting couple, a young artist and his sister, just then rising into the high reputation which they have since so deservedly sustained. The two families lived with their separate establishments in this roomy and commodious mansion on the best possible terms of neighbourhood, but as completely apart as if they had resided in different houses; the only part which they shared in common being the spacious entrance-hall and the wide stone staircase: and on that staircase I had the happiness of forming an acquaintance, which soon ripened into intimacy, with a very beautiful Italian greyhound belonging to the young painter and his sister.

I, who had from childhood the love of dogs, which is sometimes said to distinguish the future old maid, was enchanted with the playful and graceful creature, who bounded about

the house with the elegance and sportiveness of a tame fawn, and omitted no opportunity of paying my court to the pretty and gentle little animal; whilst Romeo (for such was his name also) felt, with the remarkable instinct which dogs and children so often display, the truth of my professions, the reality and sincerity of my regard, and not only returned my caresses with interest, but showed a marked preference for my society; would waylay me in the hall, follow me up stairs and down, accompany me into my friend's drawing-room, steal after me to my own bedchamber, and, if called by his master and mistress, would try to entice me into their part of the domicile, and seem so glad to welcome me to their apartments, that it furnished an additional reason for my frequent visits to those accomplished young people.

In short, it was a regular flirtation; and when I went away, next to the dear and excellent friends whom I was leaving, I lamented the separation from Romeo. Although I had a pet dog at home, (when was I ever without one?) and that dog affectionate and beautiful, I yet missed the beautiful and affectionate Ita-

lian greyhound. And Romeo missed me. My friends wrote me word that he wandered up the house and down; visited all my usual haunts; peeped into every room where he had ever seen me; listened to every knock; and was for several days almost as uneasy as if he had lost his own fair mistress.

Two years passed before I again visited Newman-street: and then, crossing the hall in conversation with my kind hostess, just as I reached the bottom of the staircase I heard, first a cry of recognition, then a bounding step, and then, almost before I saw him, with the speed of lightning Romeo sprang down a whole flight of stairs, and threw himself on my bosom, trembling and quivering with delight, and nestling his delicate glossy head close to my cheek, as he had been accustomed to do during our former intercourse.

Poor, pretty Romeo! he must be dead long ago! But Mr. John Hayter may remember, perhaps, giving me a drawing of him, trailing a wreath of roses in front of an antique vase;—a drawing which would be valuable to any one, as it combines the fine taste of one of our most

tasteful painters with the natural grace of his elegant favourite; but which, beautiful as it is, I value less as a work of art than as a most faithful and characteristic portrait of the gentle and loving creature, whom one must have had a heart of stone not to have loved after such a proof of affectionate recognition.

FLIRTATION EXTRAORDINARY.

THERE is a fashion in everything — more especially in everything feminine, as we luckless wearers of caps and petticoats are, of all other writers, bound to allow: the very faults of the ladies (if ladies can have faults), as well as the terms by which those faults are distinguished, change with the changing time. The severe but honest puritan of the Commonwealth was succeeded by the less rigid, but probably less sincere prude, who, from the Restoration to George the Third's day, seems, if we may believe those truest painters of manners, the satirists and the comic poets, to have divided the realm of beauty with the fantastic coquette— *L'Allegro* reigning over one half of the female world, *Il Pensieroso* over the other.

With the decline of the artificial comedy, these two grand divisions amongst women,

which had given such life to the acted drama, and had added humour to the prose of Addison and point to the verse of Pope, gradually died away. The Suspicious Husband of Dr. Hoadly, one of the wittiest and most graceful of those graceful and witty pictures of manners, which have now wholly disappeared from the comic scene, is, I think, nearly the last in which the characters are so distinguished. The wide-reaching appellations of prude and coquette,* the recognised title, the definite classification, the outward profession were gone, whatever might be the case with the internal propensities; and the sex, somewhat weary, it may be, of finding itself called by two names, neither of them very desirable, the one being very disagreeable and the other a little naughty, branched off into innumerable sects, with all manner of divisions and sub-divisions, and has contrived to exhibit during the last sixty or seventy years as great a variety of humours,

* Perhaps flirt may be held to be no bad substitute: Yes! flirt and coquette may pass for synonymous. But under what class of women of this world shall we find the prude? The very species seems extinct.

good or bad, and to deserve and obtain as many epithets (most of them sufficiently ill-omened), as its various and capricious fellow-biped called man.

Amongst these epithets were two which I well remember to have heard applied some thirty years ago to more than one fair lady in the good town of Belford, but which have now passed away as completely as their disparaging predecessors, coquette and prude. The "words of fear" in question were "satirical" and "sentimental." With the first of these sad nicknames we have nothing to do. Child as I was, it seemed to me at the time, and I think so more strongly on recollection, that in two or three instances the imputation was wholly undeserved; that a girlish gaiety of heart on the one hand, and a womanly fineness of observation on the other, gave rise to an accusation which mixes a little, and a very little cleverness, with a great deal of ill-nature. But with the fair satirist, be the appellation true or false, we have no concern; our business is with one lady of the class sentimental, and with one, and one only, of those adventures to which ladies

of that class are, to say the least, peculiarly liable.

Miss Selina Savage, (her detractors said that she was christened Sarah, founding upon certain testimony, of I know not what value, of aunts and godmothers; but I abide by her own signature, as now lying before me in a fine slender Italian hand, at the bottom of a note somewhat yellow by time, but still stamped in a French device of *pensées* and *soucis*, and still faintly smelling of attar of roses; the object of the said note being to borrow "Mr. Pratt's exquisite poem of Sympathy,")—Miss Selina Savage (I hold by the autograph) was a young lady of uncertain age; there being on this point also a small variation of ten or a dozen years between her own assertions and those of her calumniators; but of a most sentimental aspect (in this respect all were agreed); tall, fair, pale, and slender, she being so little encumbered with flesh and blood, and so little tinted with the diversity of colouring thereunto belonging,—so completely blonde in hair, eyes, and complexion, that a very tolerable portrait of her might be cut out in white paper, provided the

paper were thin enough, or drawn in chalks, white and black, upon a pale brown ground. Nothing could be too shadowy or too vapoury; the Castle Spectre, flourishing in all the glory of gauze drapery on the stage of Drury-Lane —the ghosts of Ossian made out of the mists of the hills—were but types of Miss Selina Savage. Her voice was like her aspect,—sighing, crying, dying; and her conversation as lachrymose as her voice: she sang sentimental songs, played sentimental airs, wrote sentimental letters, and read sentimental books; has given away her parrot for laughing, and turned off her footboy for whistling a country-dance.

The abode of this amiable damsel was a small neat dwelling, somewhat inconveniently situated, at the back of the Holy Brook, between the Abbey Mills on the one side and a great timber-wharf on the other, with the stream running between the carriage-road and the house, and nothing to unite them but a narrow foot-bridge, which must needs be crossed in all weathers. It had, however, certain recommendations which more than atoned for these defects in the eyes of its romantic mistress: three mid-

dle-sized cypress-trees at one end of the court; in the front of her mansion two well-grown weeping willows; an address to "Holy Brook Cottage," absolutely invaluable to such a correspondent, and standing in most advantageous contrast with the streets, terraces, crescents, and places of which Belford was for the most part composed; and a very fair chance of excellent material for the body of her letters by the abundant casualties and Humane Society cases afforded by the footbridge — no less than one old woman, three small children, and two drunken men having been ducked in the stream in the course of one winter. Drowning would have been too much of a good thing; but of that, from the shallowness of the water, there was happily no chance.

Miss Savage, with two quiet, orderly, light-footed, and soft-spoken maidens, had been for some years the solitary tenant of the pretty cottage by the Holy Brook. She had lost her father during her early childhood; and the death of her mother, a neat quiet old lady, whose interminable carpet-work is amongst the earliest of my recollections — I could draw the

pattern now, — and the absence of her brother, a married man with a large family and a prosperous business, who resided constantly in London,—left the fair Selina the entire mistress of her fortune, her actions, and her residence. That she remained in Belford, although exclaiming against the place and its society — its gossiping morning visits and its evening card-parties, as well as the general want of refinement amongst its inhabitants — might be imputed partly perhaps to habit, and an aversion to the trouble of moving, and partly to a violent friendship between herself and another damsel of the same class, a good deal younger and a great deal sillier, who lived two streets off, and whom she saw every day and wrote to every hour.

Martha, or, as her friend chose to call her, Matilda Marshall, was the fourth or fifth daughter of a spirit-merchant in the town. Frequent meetings at the circulating library introduced the fair ladies to each other, and a congeniality of taste brought about first an acquaintance, and then an intimacy, which difference of station (for Miss Savage was of the

highest circle in this provincial society, and poor Martha was of no circle at all,) only seemed to cement the more firmly.

The Marshalls, flattered by Selina's notice of their daughter, and not sorry that that notice had fallen on the least useful and cheerful of the family—the one that amongst all their young people they could the most easily spare, put her time and her actions entirely into her own power, or rather into that of her patroness. Mr. Marshall, a calculating man of business, finding flirtation after flirtation go off without the conclusion matrimonial, and knowing the fortune to be considerable, began to look on Matilda as the probable heiress; and except from her youngest brother William, a clever but unlucky schoolboy, who delighted in plaguing his sister and laughing at sentimental friendships, this intimacy, from which all but one member was sedulously excluded, was cherished and promoted by the whole family.

Very necessary was Miss Matilda at the Holy Brook Cottage. She filled there the important parts of listener, adviser, and confidant; and filled them with an honest and simple-hearted

sincerity which the most skilful flatterer that ever lived would have failed to imitate. She read the same books, sang the same songs, talked in the same tone, walked with the same air, and wore the same fashions; which upon her, she being naturally short and stout, and dark-eyed and rosy, had, as her brother William told her, about the same effect that armour similar to Don Quixote's would have produced upon Sancho Panza.

One of her chief services in the character of confidant was of course to listen to the several love passages of which, since she was of the age of Juliet, her friend's history might be said to have consisted. How she had remained so long unmarried might have moved some wonder, since she seemed always immersed in the passion which leads to such a conclusion: but then her love was something like the stream that flowed before her door—a shallow brooklet, easy to slip into, and easy to slip out of. From two or three imprudent engagements her brother had extricated her; and from one, the most dangerous of all, she had been saved by her betrothed having been claimed

the week before the nuptials by another wife. At the moment of which we write, however, the fair Selina seemed once more in a fair way to change her name.

That she was fond of literature of a certain class, we have already intimated; and, next after Sterne and Rousseau, the classics of her order, and their horde of vile imitators, whether sentimental novelists, or sentimental essayists, or sentimental dramatists, she delighted in the horde of nameless versifiers whom Gifford demolished; in other words, after bad prose her next favourite reading was bad verse; and as this sort of verse is quite as easy to write as to read—I should think of the two rather easier—she soon became no inconsiderable perpetrator of sonnets without rhyme, and songs without reason; and elegies, by an ingenious combination, equally deficient in both.

After writing this sort of verse, the next step is to put it in print; and in those days, (we speak of above thirty years ago,) when there was no Mrs. Hemans to send grace and beauty, and purity of thought and feeling, into every corner of the kingdom—no Mary Howitt

to add the strength and originality of a manly mind to the charm of a womanly fancy, — in those days the Poet's Corner of a country newspaper was the refuge of every poetaster in the county. So intolerably bad were the acrostics, the rebuses, the epigrams, and the epitaphs which adorned those asylums for fugitive pieces, that a selection of the worst of them would really be worth printing amongst the Curiosities of Literature. A less vain person than Miss Selina Savage might have thought she did the H——shire Courant honour in sending them an elegy on the death of a favourite bullfinch, with the signature 'Eugenia.'

It was printed forthwith, read with ecstatic admiration by the authoress and her friend, and with great amusement by William Marshall, who, now the spruce clerk of a spruce attorney, continued to divert himself with worming out of his simple sister all the secrets of herself and her friend, and was then unfair enough to persecute the poor girl with the most unmerciful ridicule. The elegy was printed, and in a fair way of being forgotten by all but the writer, when in the next number

of the Courant appeared a complimentary sonnet addressed to the authoress of the elegy, and signed "Orlando."

Imagine the delight of the fair Eugenia! She was not in the least astonished, — a bad and inexperienced writer never is taken by surprise by any quantity of praise; but she was charmed and interested as much as woman could be. She answered his sonnet by another, which, by the bye, contained, contrary to Boileau's well-known recipe, and the practice of all nations, a quatrain too many. He replied to her rejoinder; compliments flew thicker and faster; and the poetical correspondence between Orlando and Eugenia became so tender, that the Editor of the H——shire Courant thought it only right to hint to the gentleman that the post-office would be a more convenient medium for his future communications.

As this intimation was accompanied by the address of the lady, it was taken in very good part; and before the publication of the next number of the provincial weekly journal, Miss Savage received the accustomed tribute of verse from Orlando, enveloped in a prose epistle,

dated from a small town about thirty miles off, and signed 'Henry Turner.'

An answer had been earnestly requested, and an answer the lady sent; and by return of post she received a reply, to which she replied with equal alertness; then came a love-letter in full form, and then a petition for an interview; and to the first the lady answered anything but No! and to the latter she assented.

The time fixed for this important visit, it being now the merry month of May, was three o'clock in the day. He had requested to find her alone; and accordingly by one, P. M., she had dismissed her faithful confidante, promising to write to her the moment Mr. Turner was gone—had given orders to admit no one but a young gentleman who sent in his visiting ticket, (such being the plan proposed by the innamorato,) and began to set herself and her apartment in order for his reception; she herself in an elegant dishabille, between sentimental and pastoral, and her room in a confusion equally elegant, of music, books, and flowers; Zimmermann and Lavater on the table; and one of those dramas—those *tragédies bourgeoises*, or

comédies larmoyantes, which it seems incredible that Beaumarchais, he that wrote the two matchless plays of Figaro,* could have written —in her hand.

It was hardly two o'clock, full an hour before his time, when a double knock was heard at the door; Mr. Turner's card was sent in, and a well-dressed and well-looking young man ushered into the presence of the fair poetess. There is no describing such an interview. My readers must imagine the compliments and the blushes, the fine speeches *de part et d'autre*, the long words and the fine words, the sighings and the languishments. The lady was satisfied; the gentleman had no reason to complain; and after a short visit he left her, promising to return in the evening to take his coffee with herself and her friend.

She had just sat down to express to that

* I speak, of course, of the admirably brilliant French comedies, and not of the operas, whether English or Italian, which, retaining the situations, and hardly the situations, have completely sacrificed the wit, the character, and the pleasantry of the delightful originals, and have almost as much tended to injure Beaumarchais' reputation as his own dullest dramas.

friend, in her accustomed high-flown language, the contentment of her heart, when another knock was followed by a second visiting ticket. "Mr. Turner again! Oh! I suppose he has remembered something of consequence. Show him in."

And in came a *second* and a different Mr. Turner!!

The consternation of the lady was inexpressible! That of the gentleman, when the reason of her astonishment was explained to him, was equally vehement and flattering. He burst into eloquent threats against the impostor who had assumed his name, the wretch who had dared to trifle with such a passion, and such a ladye-love; and being equally well-looking and fine-spoken, full of rapturous vows and ardent protestations, and praise addressed equally to the woman and the authoress, conveyed to the enchanted Selina the complete idea of her lover-poet.

He took leave of her at the end of half an hour, to ascertain, if possible, the delinquent who had usurped his name and his assignation, purposing to return in the evening to meet her

friend; and again she was sitting down to her writing table, to exclaim over this extraordinary adventure, and to dilate on the charms of the true Orlando, when three o'clock struck, and a third knock at the door heralded a third visiting ticket, and a *third* Mr. Turner!!!

A shy, awkward, simple youth, was this,—"the real Simon Pure!"—bowing and bashful, and with a stutter that would have rendered his words unintelligible even if time had been allowed him to bring them forth. But no time was allowed him. Provoked past her patience, believing herself the laughing-stock of the town, our sentimental fair one forgot her refinement, her delicacy, her fine speaking, and her affectation; and calling her maids and her footboy to aid, drove out her unfortunate suitor with such a storm of vituperation—such a torrent of plain, honest, homely scolding—that the luckless Orlando took to his heels, and missing his footing on the narrow bridge, tumbled headforemost into the Holy Brook, and emerged dripping like a river god, to the infinite amusement of the two impostors, and of William Marshall, the contriver of the jest, who lay

per[illegible] in the mill, and told the story, as a great secret, to so many persons, that before the next day it was known half over the place, and was the eventual cause of depriving the good town of Belford of one of the most inoffensive and most sentimental of its inhabitants. The fair Selina decamped in a week.

Note. — Whilst correcting the proof sheet of this paper, (January 18th, 1835,) I see with some amusement, in that admirable literary Journal the Athenæum, an old French anecdote which bears considerable resemblance to the adventure of poor Miss Savage. How the coincidence can have occurred I have no means of divining; — unless, indeed, our wicked friend Mr. William Marshall may have happened to meet with the story of "Les trois Racans."

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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